



BIGFOOT

THE SASQUATCH



AS A SKEPTIC WHO INVESTIGATES cryptozoological mysteries, I am sometimes asked by exasperated proponents, “Why do you even bother? If you don’t think cryptids are real, why waste your time picking on cryptozoology?”

I explain that cryptozoology is my first love. It was my youthful obsession with monster mysteries that led me to the skeptical literature in the first place, and I’ve never lost my fondness for the topic. I don’t think of myself as picking on cryptids, but as making an all-too-rare effort to solve cryptozoological mysteries.

You may be surprised by one of the reasons I find myself drawn to such mysteries: I once personally found a Bigfoot track. My parents were silvicultural contractors in British Columbia. Thus I spent most of the summers of my childhood in tree-planting camps in the remote wilderness (a wilderness I later returned to for a ten-year career as a professional shepherd). In those days, tree-planting camps were tipi-filled refuges for the last first-generation hippies. In the daytime, the crew was trucked out to plant trees in the hills while the cooks worked in the cook trailer—and we feral hippie children (I remember young friends named Raven and Blue Sky) had the run of the camp. It was a nice way to grow up, catching frogs and fishing and playing in the mud.

One day, not far from camp, my brother and I came across a giant footprint stamped deeply into the mud at the side of a dirt road. We surmised that the other tracks were lost in the debris of the forest floor—evidence of the giant stride of the Sasquatch.

Was it a genuine Bigfoot track? I doubt it—now. The tree planters loved to play practical jokes, and my brother believes that later we may have been tipped off that this was a prank. But it doesn’t matter. The point is that I know, deep in my bones, how the mystery of Bigfoot can take root in the imagination. For my entire life, I’ve wondered, “Could Sasquatch really exist?” Answering that question is one of the reasons I became a skeptical investigator. Here is some of what I have learned.

THE HISTORICAL VIEW

When discussing the possibility of the existence of Sasquatch, most books, articles, and news reports start in the same place. First, they describe the pop-culture notion of Bigfoot and ask if the animal is real. Then, they point to an accumulated “mountain of evidence” for the creature and look back to historical accounts that appear to resemble modern Sasquatch lore.

This approach (common in the coverage of all cryptozoological claims) starts at the wrong end of history. Talking about the myth in its current form is beside the point. We know that a legend now exists, and, as anthropologist John Napier warned, “Few would deny that today the tales of the Sasquatch are subject to intense cultural reinforcement.”¹

What we want to discover is: Where the heck did the Bigfoot idea come from in the first place? Has the legend changed over time? Does the story feel compelling only because we are so steeped in decades of Bigfoot folklore and popular culture? Even before considering the scientific plausibility of Sasquatch, the historian’s view may reveal that the “mountain of evidence” is an edifice built on sand. Where does Bigfoot come from? The answers may lie as far back as the origin of storytelling itself.

Ogres

The Field Guide to Bigfoot and Other Mystery Primates is an odd but intriguing pro-Sasquatch book that attempts to describe the many varieties of human-like creatures reported in eyewitness testimony around the world. It is certainly surprising to learn that modern witnesses have routinely reported Bigfoot-like creatures as large as 12, 15, or even 20 feet tall,² but many readers may be most taken aback by the decision by the authors of the guide to include the monster Grendel (from the Anglo-Saxon epic poem *Beowulf*) as a “mystery primate.” This seems like an outrageous stretch, but it does help to spotlight an important truth: fantastic tales of humanoid monsters, ogres, and wild men were common in almost all cultures for thousands of years before the emergence of a canonical portrait of “Bigfoot.” It is natural that giant lore should be a universal feature of human storytelling. After all, giants are the easiest monsters to imagine: bigger, stronger, wilder versions of ourselves.

Like other peoples worldwide, Native Americans told stories of ogres and wild men. Today, many Bigfoot enthusiasts (“Bigfooters”) retroactively link these ancient stories to the modern conception of Bigfoot: “The first Americans acknowledged these hairy races, and their tales come down to us in the records that ethnographers, folklorists, and anthropologists have preserved in overlooked essays on hairy-giant legends and myths. Examining these closely, a pattern begins to emerge of Bigfoot revealed.”³ Making this connection has the effect of conflating a rich variety of diverse cultural traditions into a single, modern composite. At best, the projection of modern monsters

into Native American stories flattens context and nuance; at worst, it may become a naive and even ugly sort of paternalism in which whites tell Native Americans what their tales “really” mean. As a practical matter, many of these appropriated stories are also a very bad fit. For example, Bigfooters routinely cite tales from eastern North America that feature man-eating “giants” whose bodies are literally covered with stone.⁴ These stories are detailed right down to the creatures’ use of magical talismans to locate human prey and their Achilles-heel weaknesses that allow warriors to escape (such as their inability to swim, look up, or gaze on menstruating women).⁵ These stone-covered cannibal-wizards are clearly not close analogues to the fuzzy, gentle, largely herbivorous Bigfoot.

To their credit, some monster advocates are uneasy about this wholesale co-optation of Native American lore as evidence for Bigfoot. Pro-Sasquatch anthropologist Grover Krantz thought that “Native stories that can confidently be related to the sasquatch occur throughout the Pacific Northwest” but complained that “it is only with some difficulty that a sasquatch image can be read into” tales from elsewhere on the continent.⁶ (In particular, Krantz doubted that legends of stone giants “who strike with lightning from their fingers” had “any physical referent at all.”) Yet even in the Pacific Northwest, Native stories include a wide variety of monsters with human-like forms. Are the underground dwarves or the underwater people described by the Twana of the Skokomish River drainage “really” Sasquatches? What of the soul-stealing “wet-cedar-tree ogre”?⁷ Should we project our expectations of Bigfoot onto the giants described by the Quinault of the Olympic Peninsula who look almost the same as humans—except for a 6-foot-long quartz spike growing out of the big toe of their right foot? (Recording this story in the 1920s, anthropologist Ronald Olson deadpanned, “If a human is kicked with this he will likely die.”)⁸ And what are we to make of the cannibal-ogress tales widespread throughout the region? In her depiction by the Kwakwaka’wakw, called Dzunuk’wa (figure 2.1),⁹ the ogress is frequently presented by Bigfoot proponents as a distorted, mythologized representation of their modern monster.¹⁰ However, there is little to justify this cultural appropriation. The Native peoples of the Pacific Northwest typically drew a sharp distinction between the cannibal ogress, on the one hand, and any of several more Sasquatch-like races of giants or feral humans, on the other.¹¹ The cannibal ogress was usually regarded not as a race but as a terrifying singular character, similar to Hansel and Gretel’s witch or eastern Europe’s Baba Yaga. Luring or snatching



Figure 2.1

The cannibal ogress depicted as Dzunik'wa on a Kwakwaka'wakw heraldic pole. Carved in 1953 by Mungo Martin, David Martin, and Mildred Hunt, it is in Thunderbird Park at the Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria. (Photograph by Daniel Loxton)

away unwary children, the cannibal ogress carried them off in the basket on her back, roasted them over a fire, and ate them. She is not Bigfoot.

Bigfooters sometimes resolve the discrepancy between stories of cannibal giants and of gentle Bigfoot by simply inventing additional species of mystery primates as needed. “In eastern North America,” writes Loren Coleman, “a specific subvariety of manlike hairy hominid allegedly exists. It exhibits aggressive behavior. . . . A few hominologists have labeled these unknown primates Taller or Marked Hominids, and others have written of them as Eastern Bigfoot. What may be in evidence is actually an Eastern geographic race, perhaps a subspecies, of the more classic Bigfoot.”¹²

Whether this retrofitting forces Native traditions into one or several Bigfoot-shaped boxes, it is an exercise in confirmation bias. Bigfoot enthusiasts look back over Native lore with an expectation of finding Bigfoot. They seize on any tales about a fabulous creature that resembles the Bigfoot they expected to find, while ignoring or reinterpreting the stories that do not. Then, having projected a modern Bigfoot into disparate Native legends, enthusiasts make the circular argument that Native American traditions confirm the existence of Bigfoot.

The Origin of the Sasquatch

It is inappropriate to link all Native tales of ogres or wild men to Bigfoot, but it is true that Bigfoot mythology has its roots in *specific* Native stories.

There is a ground zero for Bigfoot, a place and time when the legend can be said to have originated. In the 1920s, in British Columbia's lush Fraser Valley, a man named John W. Burns collected the original eyewitness reports of encounters with "Sasquatch." (This was a term that Burns apparently coined as an anglicization of a word in the mainland dialects of the Halkomelem language of the Coast Salish people.)¹³ All of modern Bigfoot mythology grew from this regional seed: spreading across the North American continent and beyond, mutating and hybridizing with later reports, hoaxes, and popular fiction.

The earliest, purest accounts are as important for historians of Bigfoot folklore as they are problematic for those who advocate the existence of a living mystery primate. Unfortunately, the descriptions of the original Fraser Valley Sasquatch are almost completely different from those of the modern "Bigfoot."

Burns was a schoolteacher and bureaucrat ("Indian agent") who worked at the Chehalis Indian Reserve, near the town of Harrison Hot Springs. His friends told him of local legends about a race of giant wild people who lived in the mountains. "Persistent rumors led the writer to make diligent enquiries among old Indians," Burns recalled in a magazine article. His questions led, "after three years of plodding," to eyewitnesses: "men who claim they had actual contact with these hairy giants."¹⁴

Burns quoted these encounter stories at length. To those used to the modern Bigfoot, the original Sasquatch stories sound very strange. The witnesses repeatedly describe Sasquatches as "men," and for good reason. As pioneering Bigfooter John Green explained, "The Sasquatch with which Mr. Burns' readers were familiar were basically giant Indians. Although avoiding civilization, they had clothes, fire, weapons and the like, and lived in villages. They were called hairy giants it is true, but this was taken to mean they had long hair on their heads, something along the lines of today's hippies."¹⁵ For example, a man named Charley Victor reported having accidentally shot a young Sasquatch. As he examined the injured boy, an older wild woman came out of the woods. Her "long straight hair fell to her waist." She conversed with Victor and performed a magic ritual to assist the boy. Victor concluded, "It

is my own opinion . . . because she spoke the Douglas tongue these creatures must be related to the Indian.”¹⁶ It was common for the original witnesses to describe such conversations with the mountain giants. Burns quoted a speech that had been given before an approving crowd of 2,000 Chehalis Natives: “To all who now hear, I Chief Flying Eagle say: Some white men have seen Sasquatch. Many Indians have seen Sasquatch and spoke to them. Sasquatch still live all around here.”¹⁷ Indeed, a Chehalis woman told Burns that she not only had spoken to Sasquatches, but had lived among them—and had given birth to a baby fathered by one of the wild men!¹⁸

Were Burns’s informants pulling his leg about these personal interactions with Sasquatches? These stories certainly sound like tall tales. (Victor claimed in an aside that “I have in more than one emergency strangled bear with my hands.”) It could be that the locals were teasing the white schoolteacher. Or it could be that Burns was in on the joke. (It is hard to know whether to take this comment as naive racism or as a knowing wink to his Native friends: “The Chehalis Indians are intelligent, but unimaginative, folk. Inventing so many factually detailed stories concerning their adventures among the giants would be quite beyond their powers.”)¹⁹ In any event, it is clear that the original Sasquatch lore did not describe the modern Bigfoot. How did the one legend give birth to the other? It all began with a publicity stunt . . .

HARRISON, BRITISH COLUMBIA

In 1957, the provincial government made funding available for projects celebrating the centennial of British Columbia. The town of Harrison Hot Springs would qualify for \$600 of that funding if it could propose a suitable project. The village council brainstormed and settled on a scheme to dust off and exploit a largely forgotten local legend: Why not fund a Sasquatch hunt? The council took the proposal to the British Columbia Centennial Committee.

Bigfoot researcher John Green (who was then a newspaper owner in tiny, nearby Agassiz) put this in perspective. “It was, of course, a bid for publicity,” he recalled, “and it was tremendously successful. Papers all over Canada played the story on the front page.”²⁰ The Sasquatch hunt proposal was rejected (on the grounds that it was not a “permanent project”), but that hardly mattered. The Sasquatch was a hit as a marketing ploy. As Green explains, “Perhaps never before has a tourist resort achieved such publicity without actually doing anything. . . . Newspaper and radio reporters flocked around,

and a tide of delighted stories rolled around the world touching Sweden, India, New Zealand and points between.”²¹ One of the news stories underlined the incentives involved in the rejuvenation of the Sasquatch legend. “The government spends large sums annually for tourist trade advertising and promotion,” raved the *Vancouver Sun*, “without getting anything like the publicity Harrison has received before one red cent has been spent.” Noting that this publicity was directly boosting the restaurant and resort industry, the newspaper urged locals not to express skepticism about Sasquatches to visitors.²²

Meanwhile, the Sasquatch was back in a big way. Although it had rejected the up-front funding request, the British Columbia Centennial Committee offered a reward of \$5,000 to anyone who could “bring in the hairy man alive.”²³ (It was wisely stipulated that conveying Bigfoot to the ceremony could not involve kidnapping.) Small-scale expeditions were launched—one led by a very driven Swiss fellow named René Dahinden, who (like Green) would remain a leading figure in the search for Bigfoot for the rest of his life. (Dahinden’s expedition investigated caves in the area, since original Sasquatch lore held that the wild people built rocky shelters or lived in caves, unlike the modern Bigfoot.)

Hoaxing was already a factor. In a pattern to be repeated often throughout Bigfoot history, some investigators were themselves hoaxers. When a different expedition set out from Lillooet, a newspaper happily reported that the men “hope to return here May 20 with ‘definite proof’ the Sasquatch live in the area.”²⁴ The team’s confidence was understandable, although ultimately foiled by a rockslide and a raft accident: when the men returned from their botched wilderness adventure, they admitted that they had intended to create Sasquatch tracks using plywood feet.²⁵

Despite the silliness of much of the press coverage, this was the watershed moment for the Sasquatch. As Dahinden put it, “The widespread publicity appears to have been the genesis of the serious consideration that the Sasquatch might indeed be a creature of considerably more substance than myth.”²⁶ In the midst of the hubbub, John Burns, the original recorder of Sasquatch lore, returned to affirm that Sasquatches were large human beings. As the *Vancouver Sun* reported, “Burns believes the sasquatch originated in British Columbia and is of Salish descent. Various Indians he has talked to say sasquatches they encountered speak the same language.”²⁷

But all that was about to change.

A SERIES OF SIGHTINGS

William Roe: The Most Important Sasquatch Case in History?

As the Harrison Hot Springs media storm wore on, a new witness named William Roe went to the press with a dramatic story that is now recognized as the first fully modern Sasquatch sighting. Roe's close-encounter tale effectively created the modern Sasquatch, giving the cryptid its now canonical appearance and behavior.²⁸ As pioneering pro-Bigfoot researcher John Green explained, Roe "was the very first to describe a Sasquatch as an ape-like creature rather than a giant Indian."²⁹ Before Roe's sighting, eyewitnesses in the Fraser Valley had described Sasquatches as fundamentally human in appearance and behavior: using fire, speaking fluently, living in villages, and so on.³⁰ With Roe, the Sasquatch transformed into a mystery primate—a primate that white people could see (figure 2.2).



Figure 2.2

The Sasquatch as described by William Roe.
(Illustration by Roe's daughter for John Green;
redrawn by Daniel Loxton from John Green, *On the
Track of the Sasquatch* [Agassiz, B.C.: Cheam, 1968])

In a sworn statement, Roe claimed that he had been hiking one afternoon in 1955 when he came across a large animal at the edge of a clearing. As he sat down to watch, “It came to the edge of the bush I was hiding in, within twenty feet of me . . . close enough to see that its teeth were white and even.” The creature squatted down in the open to eat leaves. Roe’s description is so precise, and so influential, that it is worth quoting here at length:

My first impression was of a huge man, about six feet tall, almost three feet wide, and probably weighing somewhere near three hundred pounds. It was covered from head to foot with dark brown silver-tipped hair. But as it came closer I saw by its breasts that it was female. . . . Its arms were much thicker than a man’s arms, and longer, reaching almost to its knees. Its feet were broader proportionately than a man’s, about five inches wide at the front and tapering to much thinner heels. When it walked it placed the heel of its foot down first, and I could see the grey-brown skin or hide on the soles of its feet. . . . The head was higher at the back than at the front. The nose was broad and flat. The lips and chin protruded farther than its nose. But the hair that covered it, leaving bare only the parts of its face around the mouth, nose and ears, made it resemble an animal as much as a human. None of this hair, even on the back of its head, was longer than an inch. . . . And its neck also was unhuman. Thicker and shorter than any man’s I had ever seen.³¹

In this account, we may see the seeds of every subsequent Sasquatch tale—and the inspiration for one famous film in particular. “Finally,” wrote Roe, “the wild thing must have got my scent, for it . . . straightened up to its full height and started to walk rapidly back the way it had come. For a moment it watched me over its shoulder as it went, not exactly afraid, but as though it wanted no contact with anything strange.”³²

To a profound extent, Bigfoot lore stands or falls on Roe. If true, Roe’s story remains among the most detailed and informative close-range sightings of an undiscovered primate. If Roe invented his creature, however, then a very dark shadow falls over all the reports that parrot his description—which is to say, most of the cases in the Bigfoot database. In particular, the famous footage shot by Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin, in which an apparent Sasquatch walks across a dry riverbed, depends utterly on Roe’s veracity. Patterson wrote about Roe’s story in 1966 and the next year filmed a virtually identical encounter with a virtually identical creature—right down to the heels-first gait, hairy breasts, and unhurried look over the shoulder while walking away from the filmmaker. If Roe was a hoaxer, it follows that the Patterson-Gimlin film must also be a hoax.

With so much riding on Roe's sighting, I assumed that a great deal would be known about Roe. After all, Bigfoot writers have promoted this encounter for more than fifty years. Looking into the case for a magazine feature in 2004,³³ I soon noticed that all the sources seem to rely exclusively on the statement that Roe sent to Green (or, worse, on secondhand sources who relied on Green).

It began to dawn on me: no cryptozoologist had ever met Roe.

Could that really be right? I contacted Green, the Bigfooter who made Roe's famous "sworn statement" part of history, and asked him directly: Did any researcher ever personally speak to William Roe or look him in the eye? Did anyone make an attempt to meet with him? Is anything substantial known about his character or background?

Nope. According to Green, "By the time I wanted to talk to him he had moved to Alberta. I don't know who may have spoken to him in person."³⁴ Nor did any researcher visit the site of Roe's alleged sighting. "At a later stage we would certainly have wanted to question Roe in person, and to go to the site with him," Green told me, "but by the time I was writing a book he was dead."³⁵ I asked cryptozoology author John Kirk (head of the British Columbia Scientific Cryptozoology Club) for confirmation. Kirk answered, "I am unaware of anyone who met him. . . . Green did not ever meet Roe nor did any researcher I know."

It is hardly the fault of Bigfoot proponents that Roe passed away. And yet it remains bizarre that one of history's most-cited Sasquatch witnesses was never once questioned by anyone. Worse, virtually nothing is known about the circumstances of Roe's story (was he even in the area at the time the story takes place?) or how it first came to be told. As Green conceded (discussing Roe's story and another from the same period), "There was no one else involved with whom they could be checked, and no records from the time and place where they were supposed to have happened."³⁶ Worse, Green was unable to find anyone who had heard Roe's story before the media circus surrounding the Harrison Hot Springs "Sasquatch hunt" in 1957.³⁷ Roe alleged that his sighting had occurred two years earlier, but that is nothing more than a bald assertion. We are asked to believe that he saw a Sasquatch, said nothing to anyone for two years, and then took his improbable tale to the press—after the publicity started.

Hearing or reading this original press version, Green was inspired to write to Roe. Roe then provided Green with his "sworn statement"—the only version of his story that history preserves. Does Roe's later "sworn" version

match his original telling? No one knows. Green was unable to tell me where he first encountered Roe's tale (or what Roe said at that time): "Sorry, I wasn't keeping records in those days."³⁸ Kirk wrote to me that Roe's story or stories are "believed to have been in the *Province and Sun*" newspapers "in 1957 prior to August"—or possibly on the radio.³⁹ Unfortunately, despite long searches through the microfilm archives for both newspapers, I have been unable to locate Roe's original lost account.

For all its influence, the Roe case is ultimately a story told by an unknown figure, for unknown reasons, under unknown circumstances. Because there is absolutely nothing to corroborate this story, a great deal of ink has been spilled in arguing that Roe's "sworn statement" renders the account reliable. As a Canadian, I am amused by early cryptozoology author Ivan Sanderson's goofy pitch that "while 'sworn statements' may not cut too much ice in this country [United States], they mean a very great deal in Canada and other parts of the British Empire. Canadians have an intense respect for the law."⁴⁰ (I am reminded of filmmaker Michael Moore's hilarious suggestion in *Bowling for Columbine* that Canadians do not lock their doors.) Of course, this argument is just silly. People lie in all countries—sometimes for no very good reason, and sometimes under oath. Criminal justice would be much simpler if "swearing" guaranteed truthfulness, but sadly it does not. That's why lawyers cross-examine witnesses in courtrooms, try to gauge their reactions, and compare their testimony with other evidence. No one did that with Roe. We have no idea whether his story was consistent from telling to telling. In fact, we do not even know what William Roe looked like.⁴¹

Raymond Wallace: The Bluff Creek Tracks

As the Canadian film and music industries know all too well, it is one thing to top the charts in Canada and another to achieve cross-border success. For all the press that the Harrison Hot Springs "Sasquatch hunt" received in 1957, the legend retained a quaint Canadian flavor until the following year. In 1958, in the region surrounding Bluff Creek, California, the Sasquatch—re-branded Bigfoot—became a break-out American hit.

It started slowly. In the early spring, some giant footprints showed up at a work site of a road construction contractor named Raymond Wallace.⁴² These tracks were fake. As summer wore on into autumn, more giant footprints appeared, again at a Wallace work site. They were cast in plaster (by

Wallace's employee Jerry Crew), becoming the most famous "real" Bigfoot tracks of all time. Then Wallace personally faked further Bigfoot tracks late in the year—and remained a Bigfoot prankster for the rest of his life.

If that sequence brings you up short, I can sympathize fully. And yet, the tracks from Wallace's Bluff Creek work site are fiercely and universally defended by Bigfoot authors. John Green insists, "The tracks that were observed in the Bluff Creek drainage in northern California in the 1950's are not just another set of tracks that can easily be set aside as something tainted by claims of fakery while other tracks are still presumed to be genuine. They are the base layer of the bedrock on which the whole investigation is founded."⁴³

The story unfolded like this. When bulldozer operator Jerry Crew arrived at the Bluff Creek work site on August 27, 1958, he was annoyed to find giant footprints stamped around his machine. Crew took them for a prank. After that, Ivan Sanderson relates, "nothing further happened for almost a month; then once again these monstrous Bigfeet appeared again overnight around the equipment. . . . About that time, Mr. Ray Wallace, the contractor, returned from a business trip."⁴⁴ New tracks were appearing regularly at the beginning of October. "Every morning we find his footprints in the fresh earth we've moved the day before," Crew said.⁴⁵ On October 3, Crew made a plaster cast of one of the footprints. Then, taking this cast to the local newspaper, he made history. Throughout California, headlines trumpeted the mystery of "Bigfoot."

Within days, suspicion fell on Wallace. The local newspaper reported on October 14 that a deputy had spoken to Wallace and that "the sheriff's office had sent word to Ray Wallace . . . to come in and explain the 'joke.'"⁴⁶ Wallace denied having made the prints, but the sheriff's suspicion was well placed. After Wallace's death in 2002, his family revealed one of the sets of strap-on wooden feet that Wallace had used for his track hoaxing. This particular set does not match the tracks that Crew cast in plaster, but it does closely match other tracks found in the area that year. Loren Coleman affirms forthrightly, "Yes, Wallace appears to have placed prank footprints near some of his work sites from 1958 through the 1960s."⁴⁷ Nor was that the beginning or the end of Wallace's Bigfoot-related mischief. "Ray Wallace lived a life of hoaxing, stretching the truth, and pranks," Coleman explains. "It was happening before Bluff Creek, 1958, and after."⁴⁸

The Wallace family's announcement in 2002 set the cat among the pigeons. It exposed a deep weakness in the case for Bigfoot: a known Bigfoot prankster had his fingerprints all over a truly central Bigfoot case, and no one was talking

about it. Worse, Wallace's hoaxing had been known from the earliest days. He was suspected immediately as the creator of the tracks found at his work sites; his status as a hoaxer was confirmed two years later when he claimed to have captured a live Sasquatch. Offering to sell the creature to Bigfoot researchers for \$1 million, he dragged out the negotiations for weeks—only to “release” the creature. (Incidentally, Wallace claimed that the captured Sasquatch would eat nothing except 100-pound bags of Kellogg's Frosted Flakes.)⁴⁹ For decades afterward, Wallace continued to produce fake tracks, make headlines, and pester Bigfooters with outlandish tall tales. “Bigfoot used to be very tame,” claimed Wallace in one typical yarn, “as I have seen him almost every morning on the way to work. I would sit in my pickup and toss apples out of the window to him. He never did catch an apple but he sure tried.”⁵⁰

Bigfoot researchers knew not only that Wallace was a prankster and that the tracks cast by Crew were found on Wallace's work site, but also that the major source of testimony about the monster allegedly throwing around heavy equipment at the site was Wallace's brother. Crew himself was Wallace's employee—as were, coincidentally, the two men who claimed to have seen a 10-foot-tall Bigfoot just days later! As the local newspaper noted, “Tracks in the dusty road were identical with those seen in the construction area,” except in one strategic respect: the new incident allegedly took place in a neighboring county. Just one day after reporting that the sheriff of Humboldt County wanted to question Wallace, the front-page headline read, “Eye-Witnesses See Bigfoot: Humboldt Sheriff's Office Has No Jurisdiction in Footprint Case.”⁵¹

Wallace was powerfully implicated in the Bluff Creek tracks all along, and yet somehow books discussed the case for decades without shining the spotlight on him. As one critical journalist put it, “Bigfooters dodge the subject of Ray Wallace—it's their dirty little secret, and the fewer questions raised about his involvement at Bluff Creek, the better.”⁵² Indeed, as David Daegling pointed out, pivotal books by John Green and Grover Krantz “fail to even acknowledge that Ray Wallace existed.” According to Daegling, “Green and Krantz are generally meticulous in keeping track of details of events and persons, so it seems very unlikely that the omission of Wallace is a mere oversight.”⁵³ If so, Daegling's view of this “whitewash” is scathing: for investigators to “simply opt not to disclose the contextual information of evidence when it is crucial for deciding the legitimacy of particular data” is “lying by omission.”⁵⁴

While Wallace's silly antics must have infuriated serious proponents, their silence was destined to backfire. In the 1990s, *Strange Magazine* editor Mark

Chorvinsky began to pointedly ask why Wallace had been “excluded from, or downplayed in, most of the official Bigfoot histories?”⁵⁵ When Wallace’s family came forward with a set of his wooden feet for making tracks, they ended the long silence once and for all. Headlines worldwide proclaimed “the death of Bigfoot.”

Forced to confront the issue, Bigfoot investigators hastened to argue that Wallace’s connection to the footprints is a red herring. Many scornfully pointed out that the tracks cast by Crew do not match the wooden feet that the Wallace family had shown to the press. Calling this objection “insipid,” Daegling noted that “Wallace’s family maintains he had not one, but several sets of bogus feet.”⁵⁶ Besides, the wooden feet revealed by the family are a *perfect* match to many of the *other* early Bluff Creek tracks.⁵⁷ “Wallace did not hoax the Jerry Crew footprint finds of 1958,” in Loren Coleman’s opinion, “but Wallace certainly left other prints that were not authentic, around Bluff Creek, which have ended up in Bigfoot books.”⁵⁸ This contaminated database is a significant practical problem, as Coleman has continued to emphasize: “The databases of various Sasquatch researchers continue to contain examples of Ray Wallace’s fakery. Because of this, the collections throw off the summary statistics and general analyses of Bigfoot track information.”⁵⁹

Nonetheless, few Bigfoot proponents seem concerned. Some have denied the problem altogether: “To even consider that Wallace, or anyone else for that matter, could produce convincing sasquatch footprints with a piece of carved wood is absurd.”⁶⁰ Others argue that skeptics have the story backward. According to Green, the wooden feet revealed by the Wallace family are forgeries based on genuine Bluff Creek Sasquatch tracks. Noting that Wallace’s wooden feet do, in fact, match some of the tracks found at Bluff Creek in 1958, Green concludes that “presumably they were made in imitation of those casts.”⁶¹ Readers will be forgiven if they find their patience strained by this degree of special pleading.

All of this is damning, not only to the case for Bigfoot, but also to the integrity of the search. If cryptozoology is to achieve its scientific aspirations, it cannot afford to be precious about even its own “bedrock” cases or to be unduly deferential to figures respected in the cryptozoological subculture. Coleman has ventured the opinion that the failure of Bigfooters to acknowledge the depth of the problems posed by the fake Wallace tracks is “due to the godlike status given to John Green and Jeff Meldrum,” with people “afraid to speak up” in challenge to the positions taken by those prominent figures. Whatever the social forces at play, the result is as Coleman describes: “There

remain bad apples in the Bigfoot baskets and they are contaminating the entire analytic apple pie. That is scientifically significant.”⁶² It certainly is. But how do we put it right? At the very least, we must acknowledge that the footprints cast by Jerry Crew and the other Bluff Creek tracks are contaminated by their close association with a habitual hoaxer and must be quarantined from the database of Bigfoot evidence. Indeed, I would say that they are radioactive—an almost certain hoax. (The clincher, in my view, is the level of coincidence that we are asked to accept: giant footprints found first at one Wallace work site and then at another Wallace work site, and Wallace employees later spot Bigfoot at a *third* location.)

As Wallace’s son put it to reporters, “Ray L. Wallace was Bigfoot. The reality is, Bigfoot just died.” Given the pivotal importance of the Bluff Creek tracks, I cannot help but think that he was right.

Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin: The Bigfoot Film

On October 20, 1967, cowboys named Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin rode into the California woods to film Bigfoot. And then they promptly did.

Shot on a bright autumn day at Bluff Creek in northern California—the same region where giant tracks at Ray Wallace’s construction site had launched the legend of “Bigfoot” a few years earlier—the shaky, hand-held 16-mm film shows a furry, bipedal figure striding confidently across a gravel sand bar. Alleged to be a female Sasquatch (inferred from what appear to be heavy breasts on the figure’s torso), this bulky-looking creature passes behind horizontal logs, low bushes, trees, and debris. As it walks away, it looks back, hauntingly, toward the filmmaker (figure 2.3).

When enthusiasts, skeptics, or mainstream journalists turn their attention to the Sasquatch, they almost invariably refer to the Patterson–Gimlin film as the “most important” evidence for Bigfoot. In social terms, this is true. The film is an enduring icon that keeps the question of the reality of Bigfoot alive in the public imagination and unifies the subculture of Bigfoot advocates. For many, it is an emotional powder keg: visceral, saw-it-with-my-own-eyes *proof* that Bigfoot exists.

As practical evidence for an undiscovered ape, however, the Patterson–Gimlin film is a dead end. I am going to say something that will be unpopular on both sides of the debate: *no one knows whether the film depicts a real Sasquatch or a man in a gorilla suit*. Moreover, after decades of argument and



Figure 2.3 The famous still from the Roger Patterson-Bob Gimlin film of Bigfoot. (Reproduced by permission of Fortean Picture Library, Ruthin, Wales)

analysis, there is no sign that the issue can be resolved unless one of three things emerges: a live or dead Sasquatch, powerful new documentary or physical evidence that exposes the film as a hoax (such as the suit itself),⁶³ or a confession from co-witness Bob Gimlin.

This is not an entirely traditional view of the case. Through decades of deadlocked argument, passionate voices on both sides have insisted that conclusive evidence is available, if only the other side would really *look* at the film. Indeed, many have claimed that the film itself is the only relevant line of evidence to pursue when considering the film's authenticity. "Ignore the human element," urged original investigator René Dahinden.⁶⁴ According to John Green, a friend of Patterson's and another of the first people to view the film, "The character of the person holding the camera has little bearing on whether a film is genuine, you have to study the film itself."⁶⁵

This sounds fair, but it does not help to determine the truth. The film is a Rorschach inkblot. For skeptics, the creature obviously is a man in a gorilla suit. For believers, the creature plainly appears nonhuman. And while one might hope that analyses by qualified anthropologists would resolve the impasse, this has not turned out to be the case.

Consider the contrasting opinions of anthropologists John Napier and Grover Krantz. Both thought that the Sasquatch was a real animal, but their anthropological expertise brought them to diametrically opposed conclusions regarding the Patterson-Gimlin film. According to Napier, "There is little doubt that the scientific evidence taken collectively points to a hoax of some kind. The creature shown in the film does not stand up well to functional analysis."⁶⁶ Krantz argued the exact opposite: "No matter how the Patterson film is analyzed, its legitimacy has been repeatedly supported. The size and shape cannot be duplicated by a man, its weight and movements correspond with each other and equally rule out a human subject; its anatomical details are just too good."⁶⁷

According to Jeff Meldrum (an anatomist and a high-profile Sasquatch proponent), "This film remains among the most compelling evidence for the existence of sasquatch, detractors and skeptics notwithstanding."⁶⁸ For their part, those detractors and skeptics pull few punches. Napier was "puzzled by the extraordinary exaggeration of the walk," asking, "Why ruin a good hoax by ordering my actor to walk in this artificial way?"⁶⁹ Daniel Schmitt, an evolutionary anthropologist and a specialist in primate locomotion, echoed Napier's conclusion, joking that "either this is a person trying to walk funny, or

Bigfoot walks in a manner that is more or less identical to people walking this way.”⁷⁰

Over forty years, an astonishing amount of ink has been spilled in analyzing the film. Re-creations have been staged and filmed, computer-animated scenes have been reconstructed, and countless diagrams have been drawn. At the end of this incredible effort, investigators still cannot agree on the basic facts about Patterson’s creature, such as how tall and heavy it was.

In the absence of either a type specimen for Bigfoot or smoking-gun evidence of a hoax, the film is unable, ultimately, to speak for itself. Luckily, circumstantial factors may cast light on the plausibility of the case: Roger Patterson’s character, the serendipitous circumstances of the filming, hearsay testimony that the film was a hoax, the apparently derivative structure of Patterson’s narrative, and the money that Patterson earned from the film.

- Proponents traditionally defend ambiguous cases of alleged cryptid encounters with the argument that the eyewitnesses are well-respected people of good character (ideally, professionals like doctors or police officers). For example, early cryptozoology author Ivan Sanderson described Jerry Crew, who preserved the Bluff Creek tracks, as “an active member of the Baptist Church, a teetotaler and a man with a reputation in his community that can only be described as heroic.”⁷¹ That option does not exist for Roger Patterson, a man characterized by even his defenders as “no angel . . . a slapdash kinda guy that you really shouldn’t do business with”⁷² and a “used-car salesman type of personality.”⁷³

Greg Long made the first significant progress in the case in decades. For a book published in 2004, he adopted a novel strategy: ignore the film and examine the filmmaker. What emerged was not pretty. Interviews with members of Patterson’s family, friends, and colleagues (conducted over several years) paint a picture of a highly artistic, small-town hustler with dreams of the big score. A stage acrobat, carny, inventor, illustrator, Bigfoot sculptor, self-published Bigfoot author, and semi-pro rodeo rider, Patterson lived and breathed show-business schemes. He aggressively courted Hollywood long before filming *Bigfoot*.⁷⁴ He also seems to have ripped off everyone he met, from family⁷⁵ to friends to total strangers. (Bigfooter Dahinden accused him of “mail fraud, pure and simple.”)⁷⁶ In the context of his *Bigfoot* film, that’s a bad combination indeed. As Long concludes, “Roger Patterson’s character fails the smell test. Sum up all the information about

Roger Patterson, and it comes down to two simple points. One, he had the ability to conceive of and create a Bigfoot suit, and two, he was a crook.”⁷⁷

- Whether Patterson was a saint or a sinner, the basic circumstances of the filming strain credibility. Patterson, a Bigfoot author, set out on a camping trip to film Bigfoot—and then he promptly did. As Benjamin Radford notes, this is a remarkable happenstance: “Patterson told people he was going out with the express purpose of capturing a Bigfoot on camera. In the intervening thirty-five years (and despite dramatic advances in technology and wide distribution of handheld camcorders), thousands of people have gone in search of Bigfoot and come back empty-handed.”⁷⁸ Such extraordinary good fortune is not, however, unique in the annals of Bigfoot research. Others—including Ray Wallace, Ivan Marx, and Paul Freeman—have exhibited a remarkable ability to find tracks, sight Bigfoot, or film the creature more or less on demand. The explanation for such good luck has often turned out to be fraud. Could that be the case with the Patterson–Gimlin film?
- Patterson insisted that Bigfoot was “no farce, hoax or idiotic scheme. On the contrary, this could be the biggest scientific breakthrough in the study of the development of man since the beginning of time.”⁷⁹ But as Daegling notes, “I have yet to correspond with anyone acquainted with Roger Patterson who thought he was above faking a film.”⁸⁰ Indeed, we know that Patterson sometimes did film staged Bigfoot evidence. Explaining that fake Sasquatch footprints can be “dug into the ground with the fingers and or a hand tool,” Krantz rather stunningly recalled, “Roger Patterson told me he did this once in order to get a movie of himself pouring a plaster cast for a documentary he was making.”⁸¹ Krantz added, without apparent concern, “A few days later he filmed the actual sasquatch.”

Long presents extensive testimony from Bob Heironimus, who claims that he played the creature in the Patterson–Gimlin film. The “Bob H hypothesis,” as it is known, is of course fiercely opposed by the Bigfoot community. Critics point out, correctly, that the truth of Heironimus’s story cannot be confirmed. The case currently boils down to conflicting testimony from two close neighbors: Heironimus’s confession that he took part in the hoax staged by Patterson and Gimlin, versus Gimlin’s rebuttal

that there was no hoax. Circumstantial evidence, though, is supportive of Heironimus. Living in the same town, Heironimus did know Patterson and Gimlin very well at the time. He even appeared in a different Bigfoot-related film project by Patterson, produced before the famous Patterson-Gimlin film.⁸² Bigfooter John Green, a strong critic of Heironimus's tale, notes further corroborating evidence while also weighing in with an objection: "There is testimony that Heironimus had a fur suit, which he presumably used to play tricks on someone, but it is Heironimus' changeable word alone that connects the suit in any way with Roger Patterson."⁸³ Testimony from several witnesses puts a fur suit in Heironimus's trunk in the correct period,⁸⁴ and it is clear that local rumor has linked Heironimus to the Patterson-Gimlin film since the late 1960s. Whether or not his story can ever be confirmed, it is certainly plausible.

- It is also suspicious that the Patterson-Gimlin film echoes William Roe's alleged encounter with Bigfoot so exactly. From the settings (clearings) to the descriptions (the creatures are identical down to the fine details, including their "silver-tipped" hair and heavy, hair-covered breasts) to the behavior (the creatures unhurriedly walking away, each with a haunting look "over its shoulder as it went") to the reactions (the witnesses watching over rifle barrels, unwilling to shoot such human-like creatures), the two accounts are practically clones. This is an "amazing set of similarities," as Long put it. "In fact, so amazing I'd say this is where Patterson came up with the 'script' for his film."⁸⁵ We know that Patterson was willing to copy Bigfoot scenes from others, at least for some purposes: a book that he published in 1966 contains illustrations that he copied without credit from other artists.⁸⁶ We also know that Patterson was familiar with Roe's sighting because the book includes Patterson's illustration of Roe's encounter—a drawing that looks for all the world like a storyboard panel for the film that Patterson shot a year later. This suggests to many skeptics that the Patterson-Gimlin film is a hoax based on Roe's story. Proponents counter that the similarities are equally consistent with accurate independent sightings of females from the same unknown primate species. This point is debatable, but it assumes that Roe's account is genuine. If Roe's report is a hoax, we would be compelled to conclude that the Patterson-Gimlin film is also a hoax.

- Finally, Patterson made a lot of money from his Bigfoot film. Whether he earned enough money to justify a hoax is a subjective question, but the film was clearly a windfall by Patterson's perpetually broke standards. "One day he held out a \$100,000 check that he got for the movie," Patterson's brother recalled. "At that time, that was quite a bit."⁸⁷

To promote and distribute the film, Patterson partnered with his brother-in-law Al DeAtley. Putting up the money to produce a feature-length movie from Patterson's footage, DeAtley took the show on the road. The business model was to roll from town to town, renting movie screens for private showings. With aggressive promotion of each screening as an event, they packed theaters with paying ticket holders. DeAtley recalled celebrating in their hotel room after the opening-night screening in a school auditorium: "So everything was cash—ones, fives, tens, and twenties. And we had a trash can full of money, and we were throwing it on each other on the bed and stuff!"⁸⁸ (Hearing this, I can't help thinking of the cartoon character Scrooge McDuck.)

Ivan Marx: The Bossburg "Cripple Foot" Fiasco

If the tracks at Bluff Creek, California, made Bigfoot a household name and the Patterson-Gimlin film gave the creature its enduring public face, it was the "Cripple Foot" case in Bossburg, Washington, that seduced Bigfoot's highest-credentialed scientific defenders.⁸⁹

In 1969, Bossburg (then a dying mining town, and now a ghost town) was the new home of a Bigfoot hunter named Ivan Marx.⁹⁰ In an extraordinary coincidence, Bigfoot tracks promptly turned up at Marx's local garbage dump in late November—even more coincidentally, discovered by Marx himself.⁹¹ These tracks, left in soft soil,⁹² had a distinctive characteristic: the right foot appeared to be severely malformed (figure 2.4). For Bigfoot researchers, this was an electrifying find. Unexpected and persuasive, the malformed footprints seemed to scream, "I was made by a real biological creature." René Dahinden arrived within days; other researchers were close behind.

Further evidence (and coincidence) was not long in coming. On December 13, Marx and Dahinden went to check on some meat they had left out as bait. Getting out of the car to inspect one spot, Marx was gone for "only seconds before he came racing back," shouting that he had discovered Bigfoot tracks in the snow.⁹³ These 1,089 tracks, again showing the "crippled" foot, meandered



Figure 2.4

One of the “Cripple Foot” tracks, showing the unusual shape of the right foot that gave the case its name. (Reproduced by permission of Fortean Picture Library, Ruthin, Wales)

aimlessly. Conveniently starting at a river, where footprints would not be recorded,⁹⁴ the trail turned back on itself—crossing and recrossing a railway track, and crossing the same road and fence “several times”—before ending at the river, where it began.⁹⁵ This route seemed a bit artificial. As Dahinden asked himself, “Why did the tracks happen to be just there, where [Dahinden] would be sure to go every day, where he checked all the time, within a few miles of the garbage dump where the thing had been reported seen all the time? It was the obvious place for a hoaxer to plant his work.”⁹⁶

In any event, the find led to a kind of Sasquatch gold rush. Everyone involved in the search for Bigfoot descended on Bossburg, armed with everything from tranquilizer guns to aircraft. This stampede reached a fever pitch when a hoaxer named Joe Metlow came forward with the claim to have a Sasquatch for sale. This bait triggered first a bidding war; then stakeouts and even a madcap chase on January 30, 1970, as competing “groups of hunters left Colville by plane, helicopter, in various vehicles and on snowshoes in an attempt to find the beast on their own”;⁹⁷ and, eventually, the embarrassment of all involved.⁹⁸

The hunters left, but the now-infamous Bossburg fiasco was far from over. As Dahinden relates, Marx continued to find Bigfoot evidence with unbelievable regularity: “It seemed that every time he called, Marx had found something; a handprint here, a footprint there, signs of an unusually heavy creature bedding down in the bush; always something to keep the trail warm.”⁹⁹

And then, the biggest news yet: Marx announced that he not only had seen the creature with his own eyes—but also had captured full-color movie footage!¹⁰⁰ Monster hunters rushed back to Bossburg to bid on Marx’s footage, offering the kind of money that would buy a new house.¹⁰¹ Then well-known Bigfoot hunter Peter Byrne swooped in with an odd arrangement: Marx agreed to put the film in a safe-deposit box, and Byrne put Marx on retainer (with a very hefty monthly salary, new camping gear, a snowmobile, and a new truck).¹⁰² Not bad for simply having some unverified film.

Meanwhile, new Bigfoot tracks turned up in the neighboring village of Arden—a staggering 5,000 footprints stomped across Arden’s fields and town dump as well as around the grocery store. Thousands of tourists flocked to see these tracks. Marx, on Byrne’s payroll, went to the scene and declared his plan to tranquilize Arden’s Sasquatch as soon as his dogs picked up the scent.¹⁰³

But Byrne was less gullible than his deal with Marx seems to imply. He was literally buying time to dig into the circumstances of Marx’s too-lucky film. Sure enough, he soon discovered the truth: Marx had faked his movie. Local children tipped off Byrne about where the film had been shot, leading Byrne to conclude that Marx “had misled us about the site of the footage.”¹⁰⁴ As he told the newspapers, the film had been made “about 10 miles from where Marx claims it was.”¹⁰⁵ With the site identified, landmarks revealed that the creature was also much smaller than Marx had claimed. Worse, the direction of the shadows in Marx’s movie differed from those in his still photographs. This debunked his claim that they had been taken seconds apart; the “Sasquatch” had clearly worked with the photographer for some time. Finally, it was discovered that Marx had been spotted buying fur pieces in a nearby town.¹⁰⁶

While Byrne was piecing together the true story, the Arden tracks were also revealed as a hoax. It turned out that a local bricklayer named Ray Pickens had created them, inspired by the news of Marx’s nearby “Cripple Foot” tracks. “I just wanted to show that anybody could fake them,” Pickens explained. His bogus feet were carved from 2- × 10-inch planks, and then nailed to boots. Notably, these confessed fakes had an inhumanly long stride, a char-

acteristic typically cited by Bigfoot hunters as a sign of legitimacy. “The stride I made was about 54 inches—not at all hard to make,” Pickens explained. “You can do the same—just trot.”¹⁰⁷

As news of Pickens’s hoax circulated, Byrne moved to confront Marx about “the fact that the footage was obviously a total fabrication.” He was too late. Marx had literally fled in the night, leaving his front door flapping in the wind and his belongings strewn across his front yard. When the safe-deposit box was opened, the only thing found were clips from old black-and-white Mickey Mouse cartoons.¹⁰⁸ (In subsequent years, Marx promoted several other Bigfoot films that are universally acknowledged as hoaxes.)

Where does this leave us? The bottom line is that the famous “Cripple Foot” trackways were “discovered” by a repeat Bigfoot hoaxer. This is a red flag so huge and glaring that the evidence from Bossburg should long ago have been set aside by all serious Bigfoot researchers. Bizarrely, the exact opposite has happened. Even knowing that Marx hoaxed “Cripple Foot”—related evidence at the time that he “found” the tracks, some Bigfooters find it impossible to set aside what they view as the inherent believability of the “Cripple Foot” prints. As one Bigfoot book put it, “In the case of Ivan Marx, the Bossburg ‘cripple foot’ prints were just too ‘good’ and perhaps too numerous for him, or anyone else for that matter, to have fabricated.”¹⁰⁹ We can dispense with the statement that the footprints were “too numerous” to have been hoaxed—after all, Pickens created a much larger number of tracks in the next town—but what of the argument that the “Cripple Foot” tracks were too “good” to have been faked?

Anthropologist Grover Krantz was seduced into the Bigfoot search by these tracks. Attempting to reconstruct the underlying anatomy of the foot, Krantz became convinced that the prints had to be genuine. If someone did hoax them, Krantz asserted, “with all the subtle hints of anatomy design, he had to be a real genius, an expert at anatomy, very inventive, an original thinker. He had to outclass me in those areas, and I don’t think anyone out-classes me in those areas, at least not since Leonardo da Vinci. So I say such a person is impossible, therefore the tracks are real.”¹¹⁰

However, Krantz’s fellow anthropologist David Daegling has very little confidence in Krantz’s speculative reconstruction of the underlying anatomy of “Cripple Foot”: “The problem with Krantz’s argument is simply this: there was no demonstration at the time, nor has there been since, that a foot skeleton can be recreated out of a footprint with any degree of certainty. Investi-

gation that has been done on this question suggests that footprints are simply not good indicators of underlying anatomy.”¹¹¹

For his part, John Napier felt that the Bossburg tracks were “biologically convincing,”¹¹² but his defense of the tracks boiled down, ultimately, to an argument from personal incredulity. “It is very difficult to conceive of a hoaxer so subtle, so knowledgeable—and so sick—who would deliberately fake a footprint of this nature,” wrote Napier. “I suppose it is possible, but it is so unlikely that I am prepared to discount it.”¹¹³ Napier may have been prepared to discount the glaring probability that the “Cripple Foot” tracks were faked, but we cannot. Again, the source of the evidence is Marx, a known Bigfoot hoaxer. What can we do with evidence found by a man who (as one Bigfoot researcher who knew Marx put it) “would lie to you just to [screw] with you”?¹¹⁴

Nothing. We can’t do anything with Ivan Marx’s evidence. The “Cripple Foot” case is radioactive.

EVIDENCE

Filtering

The case for Bigfoot rests on two primary lines of evidence: the reports of alleged eyewitnesses and footprints. We’ll consider both in a moment, but I want to first talk about a deep conceptual problem that runs through all Bigfoot evidence and, indeed, all of cryptozoology: how to filter good data from bad.

Everyone agrees that some eyewitness reports and footprints are hoaxes or mistakes. When pressed on this, cryptozoologists often concede the likelihood that *most* accounts may be inaccurate. On the face of it, this seems to be a small concession: after all, it would only take one confirmed case to prove that Bigfoot exists. But even if we assume for the sake of argument that there is a signal hidden in the noise (and there is no compelling reason to make this assumption), how could we detect it? In other words, would we know a Sasquatch if we saw one?

Eyewitness descriptions are wildly, outrageously variable; without type specimens, there is no way to determine which (if any) descriptions are accurate. For example, many Sasquatch witnesses have reported seeing creatures of heights that strain belief. Bigfooters reject such cases, based on little more than personal incredulity. As John Green noted, “From time to time someone will claim to have seen something like a Sasquatch that was 10 feet tall, or 12, or 14, but everyone just assumes they are mistaken.”¹¹⁵ Indeed, some

witnesses report even taller creatures, but the assumption that they are mistaken seems hard to justify within a cryptozoological framework. Isn't a priori rejection of eyewitness testimony the sin of the close-minded "scoftics"?¹¹⁶ Why reject firsthand accounts of 15-foot monsters while accepting 7-foot monsters on the strength of the same type of eyewitness evidence? Green reflected uneasily on this tendency: "Eight feet tall seems to be about right for a monster. It's big enough to be impressive, but not so big as to cause much controversy. . . . It would be comfortable, therefore, if one could assume that a full-grown Sasquatch is eight feet tall and leave it at that. For years, that's about what has been done."¹¹⁷

Cryptozoologists are really backed into a corner here. On the one hand, such reports seem self-evidently silly. On the other, *the entire point of cryptozoology is that eyewitness testimony about unlikely creatures should not be rejected on the basis of a priori implausibility*. How do cryptozoologists deal with this problem? Badly. Most just take it for granted that common sense can eliminate most bad data. Green notes that "trying to sort out the less-obvious fakes from the genuine information is a major task,"¹¹⁸ but the situation is much grimmer. Without hard evidence (such as confessions), Bigfooters have no means to confirm that bad data is bad. What if Bigfoot really is made of titanium, as has been suggested?¹¹⁹ No one can prove otherwise.

Sounding weird is not in itself evidence that a report is inaccurate; if it were, why bother with cryptozoology in the first place? And if eyewitness accounts are filtered through the preconceptions of the pro-Sasquatch subculture, how can we extract a composite picture of Bigfoot from the artificially selected database that remains?

Eyewitness Accounts

In any event, the fact remains: thousands of people say that they have seen Bigfoot. Everyone agrees that many of those witnesses are sincere. What *did* they see in the woods?

Many of these cases will never be solved. I have gone along with the convention of referring to the totality of eyewitness reports as a "database," but this conceals the deep chaos of the eyewitness record. Collected by amateurs over decades, encounter anecdotes are extraordinarily variable. This frustrates attempts to construct a composite Bigfoot or extract useful statistical information.

To begin with, many reports are fragmentary. Musing in 1970 about the possibility of doing statistical analyses of eyewitness reports, John Green was all too aware that the information in his physical card file, “cannot be considered very accurate, since many cards say no more than ‘John Doe reported to have seen Sasquatch,’ with no definite time or place or description and considerable room to question whether anyone actually saw anything.”¹²⁰ Grover Krantz noted further obstacles to such analyses, since available reports “include vague descriptions, uncertain locations, erroneous observations, and some hoaxes—and we generally do not know which of the reports are tainted in these ways.”¹²¹

Worse, as we have discussed, eyewitness reports are variable and diverge often from the popular, canonical Bigfoot. Some accounts feature Sasquatches with huge pointed ears, complex markings, or heights over 12 feet tall. Bigfoot is reported in many colors, at many sizes, with many diverging anatomies. In some reports, Bigfoot can speak human languages. And, although this is systematically downplayed in the mainstream Bigfoot literature, it is very common for witnesses to claim that Bigfoot has paranormal features and abilities, such as eyes that literally glow, psychic powers, or flying saucer-type vehicles.¹²²

John Napier was hopeful that composite Sasquatch data could be useful under certain restricted circumstances, but he was not naive. Noting that “the reports of solid citizens can be as false as the ramblings of the town drunk,”¹²³ Napier gave a warning that should echo throughout Bigfoot research and throughout cryptozoology: “Eyewitness accounts offer considerable problems of interpretation. Individually they can probably be ignored; who knows under what conditions of exhaustion, mental stress, alcoholism or drug addiction, etc., the sighting was made? Was the eyewitness . . . hallucinated, fooled or simply lying through his teeth? There is no certain way of telling what factors were influencing his judgment.”¹²⁴

Misidentification Errors

One fundamental problem with eyewitness tales of Bigfoot encounters is that people make up stories. Another, even larger problem is that people make *mistakes*. As Grover Krantz noted, “With enough imagination almost any object of about the right size and shape can be seen as a sasquatch.”¹²⁵

Krantz was right about that. I know because I have seen it happen. I was a shepherd for about ten years, working in the remote wilderness along the

British Columbia side of the Alaska panhandle. We used crews of three people to herd flocks of 1,500 sheep on tree plantations (as a brush-removal tool for silviculture). One day, I returned to the flock to find shepherds Jill Carrier and Jolene Shepherd (a much remarked-on coincidence, that surname) talking excitedly. "While you were gone," they began, laughing a little nervously, "we, uh, saw a Sasquatch." They hastened to add that they were, well, *pretty* sure that it was a tall stump. After all, it stood still for a very long time, and half-burned stumps and broken logs are everywhere on overgrown clearcuts in British Columbia. Such logging debris (slash) can look like anything. A Sasquatch is a perfectly predictable occasional illusion, although this time it was especially compelling. The women laughed, confessing that they could have sworn that the Sasquatch turned its head to follow them.

I will not keep you in suspense. It was indeed a stump. (We were able to examine it later.) But the illusion from the original vantage point was very powerful. Even staring right at it, we could not be sure that it was not a Sasquatch. If we had not had the chance to check it out, this sighting could well have become a strong case for the existence of Bigfoot. Think of it: an extended, broad-daylight sighting by multiple witnesses, all of them experienced outdoor professionals. And memory is collaborative and malleable. If we had left the plantation at the end of the summer believing that we had seen a Sasquatch, our memories of the event would have "improved" over time.

Nor are stumps the only source of misidentification errors. All skeptical discussions of Bigfoot note that the creature looks very much like a person and even more like a bear (figure 2.5). Moreover, the bulk of Sasquatch sightings come from bear habitat (and all Sasquatch sightings come, by definition, from human habitat). In 2009, a paper in the *Journal of Biogeography* found that Sasquatch distribution is essentially identical to black bear distribution. "Although it is possible that Sasquatch and *U[rsus] americanus* share such remarkably similar bioclimatic requirements," the authors note wryly, "we nonetheless suspect that many Bigfoot sightings are, in fact, of black bears."¹²⁶

A typical response from Bigfoot enthusiasts is to simply deny that there is a compelling resemblance. "While we cannot discount these possibilities in some cases," wrote Christopher Murphy, "the difference between sasquatch, bears, and hikers are very obvious."¹²⁷ John Bindernagel similarly asserted, "Although it has been suggested that both black bears and grizzly bears are regularly misidentified as sasquatches, I would suggest that this occurs only rarely and is most unlikely in the case of sightings or encounters lasting more

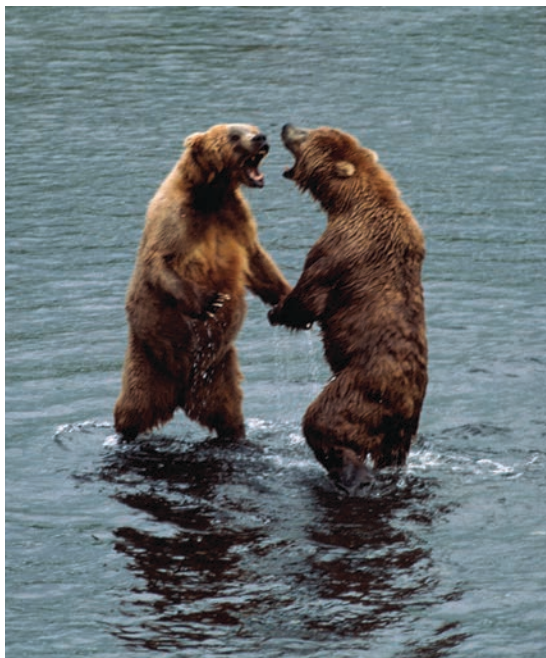


Figure 2.5

Two brown bears spar in Alaska. (Photograph by Dave Menke; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

than one or two seconds.”¹²⁸ Often, an illustration compares these “usual suspects” with an artist’s conception of a Sasquatch—under the brightly lit, unobstructed, close-up conditions of a police lineup.

Some Bigfooters argue that bears are a poor fit on the grounds that it is anatomically impossible for bears to walk more than a few steps on their hind legs. I’ll happily concede that extended upright walks are unusual for bears, but such walking behavior can occur in nature. I have seen video footage of an adult black bear striding along confidently on her hind legs for periods of twelve seconds (an eternity during a high-adrenaline Bigfoot sighting), and the effect is heart-stoppingly Sasquatch-like.¹²⁹

But this is somewhat beside the point. Bigfoot sightings happen out in the world, where viewing conditions are never perfect and direct comparisons are not possible. Even if we were to grant that humans, bears, and Sasquatch look dissimilar, the simple fact remains: people make whoppingly huge misidentification errors all the time.

This was certainly the case during my shepherding career. It’s not that my colleagues and I were poor observers. Quite the opposite. From dawn to dusk, a shepherd’s primary job is to see everything: if 1 sheep out of 1,500 has a sore

foot or is about to jump over a dangerous log, it's the shepherd's job to notice it. We were highly experienced with the terrain, wildlife, and observing conditions. But we still made misidentification errors. The reason is that we saw a tremendous number of things, all of them under variable real-world conditions.

We had no end of close encounters with wildlife, from wolves to grouse to moose to grizzlies. Added to those were thousands of sheep sightings per minute, plus our wide-ranging guardian dogs, plus our co-workers and herding dogs, plus a vast unknown number of trees, bushes, stumps, and logs. As the number of seeing events continued to increase, the relatively rare errors began to accumulate. Some of them were doozies. For example, several times I watched "grizzly bears," only to have them morph into sheep before my eyes. The opposite was also true: several times the object I initially identified as a sheep or a group of sheep turned out to be a grizzly or black bear. Likewise, seeing stumps as bears was so common that we gave this illusion a (not very imaginative) name. "Nah, just a stump-bear," we would say. (And sometimes we were wrong about *that*, too.)

In one memorable instance, Shepherd was napping in the bushes beside the sheep as they snoozed and ruminated. She was awakened by a small commotion (such catnaps are a one-ear-open sort of affair) and looked around to see a strange dog on the far side of the resting flock. Not stopping to wonder what a domestic dog would be doing in the remote wilderness, she charged through the bushes toward it, yelling and waving a stick. She burst through the brush . . . and stopped. Towering over her, almost close enough to touch, three grizzly bears (a mother and two grown cubs) stood up in surprise.

Mistakes are predictable—for anyone who goes into the wilderness. Viewing conditions vary and are never ideal. The time of day, the season, the surrounding foliage, the weather, and human variables (sleepiness, experience, expectation, fear, eyesight, and so on) all conspire to reduce people's reliability as witnesses. As long as humans are fallible to even a tiny degree, this is just a numbers game. Over sufficient time, a large enough number of observations will lead to dramatic errors. Millions of people see animals in North America every year: deer flashing across a highway, bears scavenging at a dump, an unidentified shape moving among the trees. Given that everyone in North America is exposed to the idea that Bigfoot might exist, the vast total number of animal sightings virtually guarantees that tales about encounters with Sasquatches will emerge—even in a world without Sasquatches.

Footprints

This brings us to the evidence that led to the very word “Bigfoot” (figure 2.6). Giant footprints are found throughout North America (and, indeed, throughout the world). Without that persuasive trace evidence, John Green mused, the Sasquatch could be chalked up to legends, lies, and hallucinations: “But none of these easy explanations can be applied to holes in the ground. Something has to make them.”¹³⁰

For cartoonishly clear giant footprints, there are only two explanations: human hoaxers and genuine Sasquatches. But many vaguer tracks amount to wishful thinking. Green conceded early on that many supposed tracks are purely in the eye of the beholder: “I have learned that people can see clear prints that to me are completely shapeless. They can see toes that I can’t see at all.”¹³¹ Based on this, he surmised that the record of footprint finds was already contaminated with “a lot” of unverified, mistaken tracks.

But there are also a lot of the bold, unmistakable cookie cutter-type Bigfoot tracks. All sources agree on two key points regarding such footprints: they can be hoaxed, and they routinely are. The hopes of Bigfoot proponents are thus

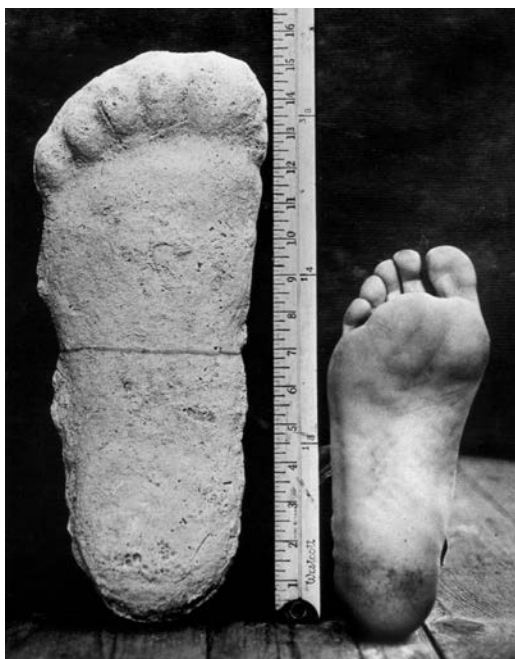


Figure 2.6

A normal-size man's foot compared with a cast of an alleged Bigfoot footprint found in Bluff Creek, California, in 1967, after the shooting of the Patterson-Gimlin film. (Reproduced by permission of Fortean Picture Library, Ruthin, Wales)

pinned on a “where there’s smoke, there’s fire” argument. “It doesn’t matter if 10 per cent of these reports are mistaken, or 50 per cent of them, or 90 per cent of them,” Green argued. “If Sasquatches are to be wished back into the books on mythology, every last one of these reports has to be wrong.”¹³²

But is there good reason to suppose that any such tracks are authentic? Bigfooters cite the consistency of footprints in support of their authenticity, but this argument does not follow at all. Consistency need not imply authenticity when independent hoaxers can draw on the same readily available pop culture. We should expect some consistency whether or not there are Sasquatches. Worse, Bigfoot tracks are *not* very consistent. As Benjamin Radford has pointed out, “Most alleged Bigfoot tracks have five toes, but some casts show creatures with two, three, four, or even six toes.”¹³³ Footprints can be anything from 4 to 27 inches long (and even greater whoppers are sometimes reported). Some are as narrow as 3 inches; some as wide as 13 inches.¹³⁴ With such staggering discrepancies, we can infer with confidence that many tracks must necessarily be hoaxes. But which ones? And is there some genuine residue left over, as proponents believe?

Again, we confront the chronic problem: the lack of a type specimen. To evaluate Sasquatch tracks, we need to look an actual Sasquatch foot. Who is to say that real Sasquatch feet do not have three toes? Perhaps five-toed footprints are always a sure sign of a hoax. As it stands, we have no way to know. The authenticity of new maybe-bogus tracks cannot be determined by comparing them with old maybe-bogus tracks.

To his credit, pro-Sasquatch anthropologist Grover Krantz boldly underlined this need for a standard: “There is no point in trying to weigh the pros and cons of the less-than-obvious specimens unless and until both ends of the scale, fake and real, are established beyond a reasonable doubt.”¹³⁵ And yet, this was a smaller admission than it appears because Krantz believed that he had a reliable standard. He claimed that he could “recognize real sasquatch tracks” using two diagnostic clues. This would be remarkable if true—certainly, he would be the only scientist on Earth known to have such a technique. Unfortunately, his “useful method for spotting fakes” is difficult to evaluate. According to Krantz, “I have told these traits to no one and have never written them down.” It is easy to understand why Krantz would have wanted to keep his sure-fire forgery-detection method out of the hands of hoaxers, but as his fellow anthropologist David Daegling observed, “In so doing, Krantz could make no legitimate scientific claims. His proposed criteria for pronounc-

ing tracks genuine could not be tested or evaluated by his peers or anyone else.”¹³⁶ And by the one criterion on which Krantz’s secret authentication system can be assessed—the ability to detect fraudulent tracks—it can be judged a failure. When a bogus track was sent to Krantz to test his system, he falsely concluded that it was authentic.¹³⁷

Given both the absence of a type specimen and the demonstrable fact that footprints are often faked, the scientific value of Bigfoot tracks is very limited.

Hair and DNA

For many considering Bigfoot for the first time, the solution seems obvious: Why not test Bigfoot’s hair or DNA? Samples of possible Sasquatch hair, scat, and fluids have been collected fairly often. As it turns out, many promising samples have been analyzed by experts or even sequenced for DNA.

To date, they have all been a bust. This is disappointing, but it is not the end of the bad news. It seems that testing hair would be unable to solve the mystery *even if Bigfooters were to discover samples of genuine Sasquatch hair*. It is the same type-specimen problem that plagues footprint evidence and eyewitness reports: no one has any idea what Sasquatch hair would look like. When hair experts examine an unknown sample of hair, the procedure is simplicity itself: they first look at it under a microscope and then painstakingly compare the characteristics of the unknown sample with those of *known* samples and try to find a match. However, as John Green succinctly put it, “when no collection contains known Sasquatch hairs there is no way to prove that the hair you find comes from a Sasquatch. At best you will only be unable to prove that it didn’t.”¹³⁸

Some Bigfoot enthusiasts are encouraged when a sample cannot be identified, as though this failure implies that the hair comes from an unknown animal. This conclusion is premature and improbable. As Grover Krantz explained, “Hair characteristics vary on different parts of the same animal, and no comparative collection exists of all types of hair of all mammals. A hair that is unlike anything in a North American collection might be from the armpit of a bear or from an escaped llama.”¹³⁹ So even in theory, the prospects for hair analysis are grim. Until “hair is pulled directly from a sasquatch body by a qualified analyst,” Jeff Meldrum agrees, the best-case scenario is a dead end: “any hair truly originating from a sasquatch would necessarily languish in the indeterminate category.”¹⁴⁰

As a practical matter, the situation is worse. Many purported hair samples have been successfully identified, and they definitely do not come from Bigfoot. A large number of them have turned out to be artificial fibers. (David Daegling cites one geneticist's "tongue-in-cheek report that the likely origin of the sample was from the interior of a couch.")¹⁴¹ Other samples come from known creatures, including humans and domestic animals. In one widely publicized case in 2005, DNA extracted from hair from an alleged Sasquatch heard in the Yukon woods proved to match that of the local bison.¹⁴² In another prominent DNA case, hair taken from a plaster cast of a supposed Bigfoot body print (the "Skookum cast") turned out to be human.¹⁴³ Such results are typical.

It is unclear whether DNA alone could settle the Sasquatch controversy under any circumstances. As a working scientist, Meldrum offered these words of caution:

The conventions of zoological taxonomy require a type specimen, traditionally in the form of a body or a sufficiently diagnostic physical body part, to decisively establish the existence of a new species. Whether DNA alone will ultimately satisfy that standard remains to be seen. I am doubtful. I am not aware of a precedent for determining a new species on the basis of DNA evidence, in the absence of a physical specimen.¹⁴⁴

Not everyone is so restrained. The Internet had been buzzing about the long-anticipated release¹⁴⁵ of a paper purporting to present DNA evidence that "conclusively proves that the Sasquatch exist as an extant hominin and are a direct maternal descendent of modern humans."¹⁴⁶ With DNA sourced, according to the report, from among 111 "samples of blood, tissue, hair, and other types of specimens," this is the most prominent Sasquatch DNA case to date. Full expert review of the team's data and methods is not yet available; however, science writers identified several serious red flags within hours of the paper's release. To begin with, it seems that it was roundly rejected by mainstream science journals. "We were even mocked by one reviewer in his peer review," complained lead author Melba Ketchum.¹⁴⁷ So how did the paper get published? Although Ketchum has insisted that this circumstance did not influence the editorial process, it seems that she bought the publication.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, her study is the only one in the inaugural "special issue" of the *DeNovo Scientific Journal*. Benjamin Radford pointed out that no libraries or universities subscribe to the newly minted *DeNovo*, "and the journal and

its website apparently did not exist three weeks ago. There's no indication that the study was peer-reviewed by other knowledgeable scientists to assure quality. It is not an existing, known, or respected journal in any sense of the word."¹⁴⁹ Invertebrate neuroethologist Zen Faulkes noted further that *DeNovo* lists no editor, no editorial board, no physical address—not even a telephone number: “This whole thing looks completely dodgy, with the lack of any identifiable names being the one screaming warning to stay away from this journal. Far, far away.”¹⁵⁰

Beyond these irregularities, there are also signs of serious problems with the study's data, methods, and conclusions. Ketchum and her colleagues found, for example, that all the mitochondrial DNA recovered from their samples tested as “uniformly consistent with modern humans,” but argued despite this finding that anomalies in their nuclear DNA analyses “clearly support that these hominins exist as a novel species of primate. The data further suggests that they are human hybrids originating from human females.”¹⁵¹ This scenario, in which “Sasquatch is a human relative that arose approximately 15,000 years ago as a hybrid cross of modern *Homo sapiens* with an unknown primate species” (as publicized in an earlier press release about the unpublished paper) is not especially plausible.¹⁵² As skeptic Steven Novella explained, “It is highly doubtful that the offspring of a creature that looks like bigfoot and a human would be fertile. They would almost certainly be as sterile as mules. Humans could not breed with our closest living relatives, the chimpanzees, or any living ape.” He added, “The bottom line is this—human DNA plus some anomalies or unknowns does not equal an impossible human-ape hybrid. It equals human DNA plus some anomalies.”¹⁵³ These problems have only multiplied with the release of Ketchum's paper and data. John Timmer, the science editor of the Web site *Ars Technica* and an experienced genetic researcher, offers the preliminary opinion that “the best explanation here is contamination”:

As far as the nuclear genome is concerned, the results are a mess. Sometimes the tests picked up human DNA. Other times, they didn't. Sometimes the tests failed entirely. The products of the DNA amplifications performed on the samples look about like what you'd expect when the reaction didn't amplify the intended sequence. And electron micrographs of the DNA isolated from these samples show patches of double- and single-stranded DNA intermixed. This is what you might expect if two distantly related species had their DNA mixed—the protein-coding sequences would hybridize, and the intervening sections wouldn't. All of this sug-

gests . . . that the sasquatch hunters are working on a mix of human DNA intermingled with that of some other (or several other) mammals.¹⁵⁴

HOAXING

The great problem for Bigfoot research is that hoaxing definitely occurs. Worse, it is common and has been so throughout the evolution of Bigfoot mythology. Most of the foundational cases probably were fabrications, and hoaxes definitely comprise a large percentage of overall footprint cases and eyewitness accounts.

In the absence of a type specimen, the Sasquatch can be supported by (and defined by) only two pillars: star cases and everything else. If either level of the database is contaminated by hoaxes, this is a catastrophic problem for Bigfoot proponents. They face stark choices: give up the Sasquatch hypothesis, rely on outright guessing or faith, or make a serious effort to purge hoaxes from the database.

The third option, sadly, gets little traction. Partly, this is because the practical problem is so daunting. As John Green noted forty years ago, it is one thing to know that hoaxes occur and another to identify them: “Things have reached a point where it is to be expected that some people will make up such stories in hope of fame or even financial gain, and I have no doubt that there are people doing so. It is hard to weed them out with any certainty, because there is ample information in print now to give anyone the details for a convincing story.”¹⁵⁵

But members of the Bigfoot subculture defend reports that they should reject. Indeed, it is a given for cryptozoologists to promote famous cases long after a possibility of deliberate fraud emerges. Evidence “discovered” by long-known hoaxers continues to feature in even the newest and best-respected pro-Bigfoot books. For example, both the “Cripple Foot” tracks found by film hoaxer Ivan Marx¹⁵⁶ and the handprints discovered by admitted footprint hoaxer Paul Freeman¹⁵⁷ are presented as strong evidence by Jeff Meldrum.¹⁵⁸ In such circumstances, the cryptozoological project is revealed as partisan advocacy rather than objective inquiry. In any scientific or rigorous discipline, a serious suggestion of fraud places a claim in a kind of intellectual quarantine. Bigfooters are very reluctant to set aside questionable evidence.

Cryptozoologist Loren Coleman agrees that some cases persist beyond their expiration date, although he disagrees with my assessment of the health

of cryptozoology. For example, he writes that the “story of Jacko—that of a small, apelike, young Sasquatch said to have been captured alive in the 1800s—is a piece of folklore that refuses to die,” despite the discovery in 1975 that news accounts busted the yarn in 1884.¹⁵⁹ I grew up regarding Jacko as a major discovery and not surprisingly: it is prominently featured in virtually all Bigfoot books, without disclosure of the evidence that it was a hoax. Nor am I alone in having considered this case to be stronger than it is known to be. As Coleman writes, “Unfortunately a whole new generation of hominologists, Sasquatch searchers, and Bigfoot researchers are growing up thinking that the Jacko story is an ironclad cornerstone of the field, a foundation piece of history proving that Sasquatch are real. But in reality Jacko seems to be a local rumor brought to the level of a news story that eventually evolved into a modern fable.”¹⁶⁰ This state of affairs strikes me as a very bad sign for the methods and integrity of cryptozoology, but Coleman is more upbeat. He told me that the persistence of the tale “says more about the transmission of information and the lack of available outlets to publish our findings.” According to Coleman, “Self-correcting occurs all the time in cryptozoology, although it may take years to transmit the information.”¹⁶¹

A Taxonomy of Mischief

Why would anyone go to the trouble of concocting a Bigfoot hoax? The Bigfoot world seems to approach this question from two contradictory positions. On the one hand, proponents often argue that most Bigfoot evidence must be real because perpetrating a hoax is a prohibitive hassle. On the other, anyone who spends time on Bigfoot’s trail learns early, and through bitter experience, that hoaxing is extremely common. A wide range of people independently fabricate tracks and sightings for a variety of idiosyncratic reasons. Some of these hoaxers are Bigfoot investigators.

The sheer quantity of Bigfoot evidence is surely impressive. To account for that “mountain of evidence” by hoaxing, proponents argue, we would have to posit a conspiracy of global reach and Machiavellian cunning. According to a rather fishy back-of-the-envelope calculation by Grover Krantz, faking all the Bigfoot tracks would require “at least 1,000 paid professionals,” whose efforts would not come cheap: “During the last forty years well over a billion dollars must have been expended on this project.” Either that, he argued, or we must imagine an unpaid horde of “something like 100,000 casual hoaxers who go out for a weekend of track making one or two times a year.” Or, finally,

we could accept what Krantz proposed as the most parsimonious explanation: an undiscovered species of giant primate stomping all over North America.¹⁶²

Krantz's math—which was based not on the number of tracks that have actually been discovered, but on his own estimate that 100 million mostly unknown track-making events must have occurred—can be safely ignored. But what of his basic arguments? Would independent hoaxers have the where-withal to create persuasive tracks? And what would they have to gain? Luckily, we do not have to guess on either question. Many hoaxers have run rings around Bigfoot investigators, and in many cases their motivations are also a matter of record.

Noting “a tendency among Bigfoot pundits to assume that any potential hoaxer is, by virtue of their poor character, also laughably inept,” skeptic David Daegling pointed out that dishonesty does nothing to diminish the intelligence or creativity of hoaxers.¹⁶³ For a stunning demonstration, consider a case shared by Krantz himself, in which Bigfoot tracks ran up a steep slope in inhumanly long 8-foot strides: “It was later found that a high school athlete had made the tracks; he wore fake feet that were put on backwards, and he ran down the slope. Whenever a new account is recorded of incredible feats of footwork, I try to remember this case and wonder how the new one might have been faked.”¹⁶⁴

From the most dazzling feats to the most pedestrian fibs, hoaxing comes in many forms and is undertaken for many reasons. Some deceptions are intended to increase the stature of the hoaxer (as when Bigfoot investigators regularly discover evidence that is too good to be true). Others are simply gags. Some are meant to make money (a proposed motivation for the probable film hoax by Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin). Another not uncommon class of fabrications might be likened to guerrilla gardening, flash mobs, or certain types of graffiti: anonymous works of art defined by their audacity and their ability to baffle onlookers.

Many hoaxers deliberately attempt (destructively or constructively, depending on your point of view) either to make paranormal researchers appear foolish or to expose flaws in the methodology of researchers or media. A widely cited example of this genre is the “Carlos” hoax of 1988, in which Australian news media were presented with the arrival of a supposed New Age channeler from America—actually a performance artist who was recruited for the role by skeptical author James Randi.¹⁶⁵ Although media coverage of Carlos was skeptical in tone, none of the major Australian news media that featured Carlos undertook any sort of due-diligence background check on

the psychic performer—which easily would have revealed that he was a completely fictitious recent invention.¹⁶⁶ This proved very embarrassing when Randi's collaborators on the Australian version of *60 Minutes* revealed the hoax on national television—to the outrage of many.¹⁶⁷

This testing type of hoax (what we might think of as a “secret shopper” or “believer-baiting” hoax) is very common in the Bigfoot world. It does not require the resources that Randi brought to his “Carlos” stunt. Recall that bricklayer Ray Pickens laid fake Bigfoot tracks on several occasions in 1971, using nothing more than wooden feet attached to boots.¹⁶⁸ (This was minor revenge. When a Bigfoot researcher described Pickens and his friend as “hicks,” Pickens was provoked to create his first fake tracks.)¹⁶⁹ In a more recent instance, a young filmmaker named John Rael produced a fake Bigfoot video and seeded it to YouTube in 2010—only to reveal the hoax in an intentionally juvenile sequel in which Bigfoot literally gets kicked in the groin. When I asked Rael about this, he told me that he hoped to “trick the ‘true believer’ into believing something that can be shown, unequivocally, to be fake” in order to “inspire the true believer to begin questioning some of their other beliefs.”¹⁷⁰

THE PARADOX OF BIGFOOT

At the heart of the mystery of Bigfoot is a paradox: many people see Sasquatches, but no one can find one. This is an extremely uncomfortable dilemma for Bigfoot advocates. Either Sasquatches are too rare to locate, in which case they should also be too rare to see; or the common and widespread sighting reports are by and large accurate, in which case science should long ago have located a specimen.

Proponents are aware that the absence of a carcass is the central problem for their field—a problem that grows more severe with every passing day. At the dawn of the Sasquatch era, it was sensible to ask skeptics to be patient. As John Green reflected forty years ago, “The most likely way for the Sasquatch question to be settled is for some deer hunter to down one—and I believe that becomes more probable each year as more and more people learn that the things are real, that they are not human, and that the first man to bring one in is sure of fame and perhaps fortune.”¹⁷¹

But after decades of fruitless patience (and unclaimed rewards of hundreds of thousands of dollars),¹⁷² Bigfooters have to explain why no one has yet located a species of animal that is supposed to be as large as a Kodiak bear. “The mantra among career Bigfoot pursuers is that absence of evidence is

not evidence of absence,” explains anthropologist David Daegling, “which is a point well taken, but the skeptic can still reasonably ask why the evidence that should be there isn’t.”¹⁷³ The most common response is an argument of necessity: Bigfoot hunters cannot find the creature, but they should not, after all, be expected to find it. Sasquatches are rare and clever, and after they die their remains are quickly erased by posthumous predation and weather. According to Bigfooters, that’s just how nature works. This was the argument of cryptozoology pioneer Ivan Sanderson: “Ask any game warden, real woodsman or professional animal collector if he has ever found the dead body of any wild animal—except along roads of course, or if killed by man. I never have, in 40 years and 5 continents! Nature takes care of its own, and damned fast, too.”¹⁷⁴ This idea was taken up by Grover Krantz, a pro-Sasquatch anthropologist, who asked, “If bears are real, why don’t we find their bones?”¹⁷⁵ In Krantz’s opinion, “We should expect to find a dead sasquatch about as easily as we find a dead bear (assuming they occurred in the same numbers and had similar life spans) . . . and dead bears are almost never found.”¹⁷⁶

Skeptics are in the business of soberly considering strange claims—such as pyramid power, alien abduction, or the psychic ability to cause someone to urinate against his or her will¹⁷⁷—as though they were perfectly plausible possibilities. But even by that standard, and with all the goodwill in the world, I cannot consider the “no dead bears” argument to be anything but foolish. The reason is simple: dead bears *are* found (figure 2.7). Often.



Figure 2.7 The skull of a grizzly bear in the collection of the Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria. (Photograph by Daniel Loxton)

Indeed, many members of the tiny fraternity of Bigfoot researchers and skeptics have *themselves* come across dead bears! Pro-Sasquatch wildlife biologist John Bindernagel told me that he has found bear skulls—twice.¹⁷⁸ Bigfoot skeptic David Daegling came upon a “cranium of a black bear, beautifully preserved,” from which he wryly concludes that “perhaps you can appreciate that, based on my personal experience, I find Sanderson’s and Krantz’s declarations to be rather hollow.”¹⁷⁹ I agree that the “no dead bears” argument is hollow and for the same reason: I found a bear carcass myself, during my career as a shepherd near the Alaska panhandle. Similarly, my brother Jason stumbled across a bear carcass while doing geochemical sampling in the far Yukon. The skull of that bear now sits on his bookcase.¹⁸⁰

The “no dead bears” argument is special pleading and worse: it is wildly, laughably wrong. But there is no amount of special pleading that cannot be rescued by still further special pleading. Bigfooters hasten to emphasize the “except by human actions” clause of their argument. Krantz insisted, “I’ve talked to hunters, many game guides, conservation people, ecology students, and asked them how many remains of dead bears have you found that died a natural death? Over twenty years of inquiry my grand total of naturally dead bear bones found is zero!”¹⁸¹

There are two problems with this “natural death” stipulation. To begin with, cause of death usually cannot be determined from a skull or old bones. As Bindernagel told me, “I really don’t know how the two bears whose skulls I encountered died—‘natural’ death or otherwise.”¹⁸² Nor can my brother account for the death of the bear whose skull graces his bookcase, although he found the carcass in an extremely remote and uninhabited, boat-access-only area. But just for the sake of argument, let’s grant the highly dubious assumption that all locatable remains are those of bears that were killed by humans. Why would Bigfoot be immune to the same cars, trucks, and guns that kill bears?

If we are to accept eyewitness testimony (and, without any bodies, Bigfooters are stuck with it), we must grant that Sasquatches are routinely exposed to the same mortal risks as bears. “There are a number of people who claim not only to have seen a sasquatch on the road but to have run into one,” explained Green, presenting as an example the testimony of a logging truck driver who allegedly hit a 7-foot Bigfoot in Oregon in 1973.¹⁸³ Many others—including pivotal witnesses like William Roe and Bob Gimlin—have described watching Sasquatches over the barrel of a rifle. A considerable number of people have even claimed to have shot Bigfoot.¹⁸⁴ Even if we grant that Sasquatches

are wily, tough, and rare, their luck must sometimes run out. Common sense dictates that hunters and truckers should occasionally bring one down. In the early days, that's just what Bigfooters expected to see. And yet, that has not happened. Let's imagine that Bigfoot is as rare as a wolverine, as stealthy as a cougar, and as powerful as a grizzly. What of it? People see wolverines, photograph cougars, and shoot grizzlies. As Daegling notes, "Wolverines are scarce animals, but we do know what their skeletons look like for the simple reason that we have them."¹⁸⁵

TOO MUCH SMOKE

The two great clichés ruling the Bigfoot literature are the "mountain of evidence" and the connected argument: "where there's smoke, there's fire." This is a non sequitur: where there's smoke, there's smoke.¹⁸⁶ And in this case, that "smoke" is so widespread that it actually argues against the existence of Bigfoot.

It is one thing to suppose that some species of large animals may exist undetected in remote parts of the world (indeed, surveys of deep ocean life have confirmed this for marine animals). It is a different thing altogether to suppose that a species of large animal could thrive in all regions of the globe without anyone ever finding one. Sasquatches are thought to live not only in the temperate rain forest of the Pacific Northwest, but across North America and beyond. They are spotted in every state in the United States, from New Mexico to New Jersey. They lurk in Florida swamps, Texas thickets, and Ohio farmland. Bigfoot even turns up in Hawaii.¹⁸⁷ (Meditate on that one first, and it seems almost natural to hear that Sasquatches have been reported on Staten Island.)¹⁸⁸ Globally, Bigfoot stomps not only through North, Central, and South America, but across Europe, Africa, Asia, and even Australia (where it is known as the Yowie).

Grover Krantz staked his scientific career on the belief that Sasquatches exist, but the planetary extent of reports of Bigfoot-like creatures was a problem that gave him pause. He warned that "when it is suggested that a wild primate is found native to all continents, including Australia, then credibility drops sharply." Even if we were to leave aside the plausibility of a global primate remaining undiscovered, Krantz knew that very few animal species have anywhere near as wide a distribution: "Beyond a certain point, it can be argued that the more widespread a cryptozoological species is reported to be, the less likely it is that the creature exists at all."¹⁸⁹

2. BIGFOOT

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- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 *Ibid.*, 31.
- 20 Green, *On the Track of the Sasquatch*, 3.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 “Let’s Not Forget the Sasquatchewen Trade,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 7, 1957, 5.

- 23 “Wanted: Sasquatch—\$5000 Reward,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 4, 1957, 25.
- 24 “Sasquatch Hunt Delayed by Intrepid Lillooet Band,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 10, 1957, 3.
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- 26 Don Hunter, with René Dahinden, *Sasquatch: The Search for North America’s Incredible Creature* (New York: Signet, 1975), 83.
- 27 “‘Nothing Monstrous About Sasquatch,’ Says Their Pal,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 25, 1957, 14.
- 28 Although there are chimpanzee- or gorilla-like monster yarns that predate that of Roe, they are distinct in two ways: they are outside the direct lineage of Sasquatch tradition, and their descriptions differ in one or more important respects from the modern composite description of Bigfoot. For example, the creatures featured in the Ape Canyon story of 1924 are retroactively included in Bigfoot lore, but their description is very different: “Their ears are about four inches long and stick straight up. They have four toes” (*Oregonian* [Portland], July 3, 1924, reprinted in John Green, *The Best of Sasquatch Bigfoot* [Surrey, B.C.: Hancock House, 2004], 61).
- 29 Green, *On the Track of the Sasquatch*, 10.
- 30 Ibid., 3.
- 31 Quoted in *ibid.*, 11–12.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Daniel Loxton, “Junior Skeptic 20: Bigfoot Part One: Dawn of the Sasquatch,” *Skeptic* 11, no. 2 (2004): 96–105.
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- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Green, *On the Track of the Sasquatch*, 10.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 John Green to Daniel Loxton, August 20, 2004.
- 39 John Kirk to Daniel Loxton, July 21, 2004.
- 40 Quoted in Roger Patterson and Christopher Murphy, *The Bigfoot Film Controversy* (Surrey, B.C.: Hancock House, 2005), 98.
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- 42 Coleman, *Bigfoot!*, 68–69.
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- 45 Quoted in “This Yeti Has Big Feet: Abominable Snowman on Klamath,” *Independent Press-Telegram* (Long Beach, Calif.), October 5, 1958, 19.
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- 48 Loren Coleman, "The Ray Wallace Debate: Part I," February 12, 2006, CryptoMundo, <http://www.cryptomundo.com/cryptozoo-news/ray-wallace-1/> (accessed April 1, 2010).
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- 51 "Eye-Witnesses See Bigfoot: Humboldt Sheriff's Office Has No Jurisdiction in Footprint Case; Scene of Activity in Del Norte," *Humboldt Standard*, October 15, 1958, 1.
- 52 Michael McLeod, *Anatomy of a Beast: Obsession and Myth on the Trail of Bigfoot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 179.
- 53 David J. Daegling, *Bigfoot Exposed: An Anthropologist Examines America's Enduring Legend* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Altamira Press, 2004), 212.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 211.
- 55 Mark Chorvinsky, "New Bigfoot Photo Investigation," *Strange Magazine*, no. 13 (1994), <http://www.bigfootencounters.com/articles/strange14.htm> (accessed April 1, 2010).
- 56 Daegling, *Bigfoot Exposed*, 180.
- 57 *Ibid.*
- 58 Loren Coleman to Daniel Loxton, August 24, 2004.
- 59 Loren Coleman, "Bad Bigfoot Data Is Still Bad Bigfoot Data," March 30, 2012, CryptoMundo, <http://www.cryptomundo.com/cryptozoo-news/bad-bf-data/> (accessed March 30, 2012).
- 60 Murphy, *Meet the Sasquatch*, 109.
- 61 Green, *Best of Sasquatch Bigfoot*, 15.
- 62 Loren Coleman, discussion comment following "Bad Bigfoot Data Is Still Bad Bigfoot Data," March 30, 2012, CryptoMundo, <http://www.cryptomundo.com/cryptozoo-news/bad-bf-data/#comment-78426> (accessed March 30, 2012).
- 63 In early 2012, an online Bigfoot critic who posts under the name Kitakaze alleged that his investigations into the case of the Patterson-Gimlin film have given him "specific knowledge of the suit and it still exists today" ("Bob Heironimus on Pax TV's Lie Detector," Bigfoot Forums, http://bigfootforums.com/index.php?/topic/7624-bob-heironimus-on-pax-tvs-lie-detector/page_view_findpost_p_576952 [accessed April 21, 2012]). According to Kitakaze, the still-confidential whereabouts and circumstances of the suit will be revealed in his upcoming independent documentary, for release in "anywhere from a year to two or more" ("Kitakaze's Patty Suit Bombshell," Bigfoot Forums, http://bigfootforums.com/index.php?/topic/30016-kitakazes-patty-suit-bombshell/page_view_findpost_p_577280 [accessed April 21, 2012]).
- 64 Quoted in Greg Long, *The Making of Bigfoot: The Inside Story* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2004), 192.
- 65 Green to Loxton, August 10, 2004.
- 66 Napier, *Bigfoot*, 95.
- 67 Krantz, *Bigfoot Sasquatch Evidence*, 122.
- 68 Meldrum, *Sasquatch*, 135.

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- 70 Quoted in Daegling, *Bigfoot Exposed*, 126.
- 71 Sanderson, *Abominable Snowmen*, 150.
- 72 John Kirk, interview with Daniel Loxton, Kitsilano, B.C., March 27, 2004.
- 73 John Green, quoted in Long, *Making of Bigfoot*, 179.
- 74 *Ibid.*, 123.
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- 77 *Ibid.*, 430.
- 78 Benjamin Radford, “Bigfoot at 50: Evaluating a Half-Century of Bigfoot Evidence,” *Skeptical Inquirer* 26, no. 2 (2002): 31.
- 79 Patterson and Murphy, *Bigfoot Film Controversy*, 30.
- 80 Daegling, *Bigfoot Exposed*, 116.
- 81 Krantz, *Bigfoot Sasquatch Evidence*, 32.
- 82 Long, *Making of Bigfoot*, 39, 109–110.
- 83 John Green, letter to the editor, *Skeptical Inquirer*, July 25, 2004 [forwarded to Daniel Loxton by Green, August 9, 2004].
- 84 Long, *Making of Bigfoot*, 47, 364.
- 85 *Ibid.*, 385.
- 86 Roger Patterson, *Do Abominable Snowmen of America Really Exist?* (Yakima, Wash.: Franklin Press, 1966); Matt Crowley, “Roger Patterson’s Plagiarism,” January 11, 2012, Orgone Research, <http://orgoneresearch.com/2012/01/11/roger-patterson’s-plagiarism/comment-page-1/> (accessed March 8, 2012).
- 87 Quoted in Long, *Making of Bigfoot*, 70.
- 88 Quoted in *ibid.*, 249.
- 89 Daegling, *Bigfoot Exposed*, 47.
- 90 Coleman, *Bigfoot!*, 127.
- 91 Most recent sources tend to name a local butcher, Joe Rhodes, as the discoverer of the tracks, perhaps because of Marx’s reputation as a hoaxer. However, newspaper reports at the time identified Marx as the actual discoverer: “Rhodes suggested Marx might look for possible tracks of Big Foot when he was hunting, and during the early fall Marx spotted some tracks at a dump” (“Cold Freezes Hounds off Humanoid’s Trail,” *Montana Standard* [Butte], December 7, 1969, 20).
- 92 Hunter, with Dahinden, *Sasquatch*, 151.
- 93 *Ibid.*, 153.
- 94 Krantz says, “The trail also began and ended on a steep slope coming out of and going back into Lake Roosevelt behind the Grand Coulee Dam” (*Bigfoot Sasquatch Evidence*, 43); John Green agrees that “the tracks came out of the water and went back to it” (*Year of the Sasquatch* [Agassiz, B.C.: Cheam, 1970], 50).
- 95 Hunter, with Dahinden, *Sasquatch*, 154–157.
- 96 *Ibid.*, 156.
- 97 “Searchers Seek Big-footed Sasquatch,” *Idaho State Journal* (Pocatello), February 1, 1970.

- 98 René Dahinden's account of the Metlow affair is detailed and fascinating, as recounted in Hunter, with Dahinden, *Sasquatch*, 159–165.
- 99 Ibid., 165–166.
- 100 “Legendary Big Foot Is Captured on Film,” *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, November 14, 1970, 3.
- 101 Tom Page offered \$25,000 for a copy of the film, as reported in Hunter, with Dahinden, *Sasquatch*, 168.
- 102 Peter Byrne, “The Hoaxed Ivan Marx Footage, as Told by Peter Byrne, Former Head of ‘The Bigfoot Project,’” September 2003, Bigfoot Encounters, http://www.bigfootencounters.com/hoaxes/marx_footage.htm (accessed April 5, 2010).
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- 104 Byrne, “Hoaxed Ivan Marx Footage.”
- 105 Quoted in “Sasquatch Quashed Again?” *Walla Walla (Wash.) Union Bulletin*, April 9, 1971, 1.
- 106 Hunter, with Dahinden, *Sasquatch*, 169–170.
- 107 Quoted in “Sasquatch Tracks Were Made by Man,” *Centralia (Wash.) Daily Chronicle*, April 1, 1971, 4.
- 108 Byrne, “Hoaxed Ivan Marx Footage.”
- 109 Murphy, *Meet the Sasquatch*, 109.
- 110 Grover Krantz, interview with John Yager, KXLY-TV, 1992, quoted in Michael Dennett, “Bigfoot Evidence: Are These Tracks Real?” *Skeptical Inquirer* 18, no. 5 (1994): 499–500.
- 111 Daegling, *Bigfoot Exposed*, 84.
- 112 Napier, *Bigfoot*, 125.
- 113 Ibid., 124.
- 114 McLeod, *Anatomy of a Beast*, 126.
- 115 Green, *Year of the Sasquatch*, 66.
- 116 “Scoftic” is a derisive jargon term coined by Roger Knights in 2003. The word is now used by cryptozoological enthusiasts to describe those they view as unreasonable, dogmatic skeptics. According to Knights, “scoftic” refers to someone who “gives witness testimony no weight whatsoever, on ideological grounds, and who asserts numerous other bits of unreasonable dogma, such as that the quantity of reports is insignificant. Scofticism is thus fanaticism behind a pose of reasonableness” (quoted in Loren Coleman, “Is ‘Scoftic’ a Useful Term?” April 28, 2007, CryptoMundo, <http://www.cryptomundo.com/cryptozoo-news/scoftic/> [accessed March 19, 2010]).
- 117 Green, *Year of the Sasquatch*, 66.
- 118 Green, *Best of Sasquatch Bigfoot*, 9.
- 119 Krantz, *Bigfoot Sasquatch Evidence*, 41.
- 120 Green, *Year of the Sasquatch*, 55.
- 121 Krantz, *Bigfoot Sasquatch Evidence*, 250.

- 122 See, for example, "Phantom Bigfeet and UFOs," in Janet Bord and Colin Bord, *Bigfoot Casebook Updated: Sightings and Encounters from 1818 to 2004* (Enumclaw, Wash.: Pine Winds Press, 2006), chap. 7.
- 123 Napier, *Bigfoot*, 198.
- 124 Ibid.
- 125 Krantz, *Bigfoot Sasquatch Evidence*, 5.
- 126 Jeffrey D. Lozier, P. Aniello and Michael J. Hickerson, "Predicting the Distribution of Sasquatch in Western North America: Anything Goes with Ecological Niche Modeling," *Journal of Biogeography* 36 (2009): 1623–1627.
- 127 Murphy, *Meet the Sasquatch*, 123.
- 128 John A. Bindernagel, *North America's Great Ape: The Sasquatch* (Courtenay, B.C.: Beachcomber Books, 1998), 28–29.
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- 130 Green, *On the Trail of the Sasquatch*, 30.
- 131 Green, *Sasquatch File*, 48.
- 132 Ibid.
- 133 Radford, "Bigfoot at 50," 31.
- 134 Murphy, *Meet the Sasquatch*, 124–125.
- 135 Krantz, *Bigfoot Sasquatch Evidence*, 36.
- 136 Daegling, *Bigfoot Exposed*, 175.
- 137 Ibid.
- 138 Green, *On the Track of the Sasquatch*, 71.
- 139 Krantz, *Bigfoot Sasquatch Evidence*, 125–126.
- 140 Meldrum, *Sasquatch*, 261–262.
- 141 Daegling, *Bigfoot Exposed*, 207.
- 142 Benjamin Radford, "Science Looks for Bigfoot," September 3, 2005, Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, http://www.csicop.org/specialarticles/show/science_looks_for_bigfoot (accessed March 25, 2010).
- 143 Doug Haijcek, dir., *Sasquatch: Legend Meets Science* (Minneapolis: Whitewolf Entertainment, 2003).
- 144 Meldrum, *Sasquatch*, 270.
- 145 Lead author Melba Ketchum's claims to have DNA evidence to prove the existence of Bigfoot have been bouncing around the mainstream press since at least 2011 (and even earlier in the cryptozoological corners of the blogosphere). See, for example, Monisha Martins, "Sasquatch: Is It Out There?" August 16, 2011, Maple Ridge News, <http://www.mapleridgenews.com/news/127905518.html> (accessed February 14, 2013).
- 146 M. S. Ketchum, P. W. Wojtkiewicz, A. B. Watts, D. W. Spence, A. K. Holzenburg, D. G. Toler, T. M. Prychitko, F. Zhang, S. Bollinger, R. Shoulders, and R. Smith, "Novel North American Hominins: Next Generation Sequencing of Three Whole Genomes and Associated Studies," special issue, *DeNovo Scientific Journal* (2013): 1–15.

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- 156 Hunter, with Dahinden, *Sasquatch*, 169–171.
- 157 Michael Dennett, "Evidence for Bigfoot? An Investigation of the Mill Creek 'Sasquatch Prints,'" *Skeptical Inquirer* 13, no. 3 (1989): 272.
- 158 Meldrum, *Sasquatch*, 110–112, 237–240.
- 159 Coleman, *Bigfoot!*, 40–42.
- 160 *Ibid.*, 42.
- 161 Loren Coleman to Daniel Loxton, August 11, 2004.
- 162 Krantz, *Bigfoot Sasquatch Evidence*, 34.
- 163 Daegling, *Bigfoot Exposed*, 75.
- 164 Krantz, *Bigfoot Sasquatch Evidence*, 42.
- 165 Robert Carroll, *The Skeptic's Dictionary* (New York: Wiley, 2003), 65.
- 166 Tim Mendham, "The Carlos Hoax," in *The Second Coming: All the Best from the Skeptic, 1986–1990*, ed. Barry Williams and Richard Saunders (Sydney: Australian Skeptics, 2001), 26–28.
- 167 Adding complexity to this story, the Venezuelan-born performance artist who portrayed Carlos, Deyvi Pena, was arrested in 2011 after federal authorities discovered that he had been living in the United States under the assumed identity Jose Luis Alvarez. Pena pleaded guilty to passport fraud in early 2012. See Jon Burstein. "Artist Pleads Guilty to Passport Fraud," *Orlando (Fla.) Sun Sentinel*, March 14, 2012, <http://articles.orlando>

sentinel.com/2012-03-14/news/fl-jose-alvarez-amazing-randi-plea-20120314_1_passport-fraud-sentencing-identity (accessed April 17, 2012).

168 “Sasquatch Tracks Were Made by Man.”

169 Daegling, *Bigfoot Exposed*, 257.

170 John Rael to Daniel Loxton, March 21, 2010. I was apprised of the hoax early and asked to contribute some discussion. I was uncomfortable with the derisive tone of the project, so I declined. More information on the hoax is available at “Bigfoot Gets Kicked in the Nuts,” February 7, 2010, Skepticallypwnd, <http://skepticallypwnd.com/?p=79> (accessed March 22, 2010).

171 Green, *Year of the Sasquatch*, 73.

172 “Sasquatch Wanted,” *Washington Post*, March 2, 1970, A9.

173 Daegling, *Bigfoot Exposed*, 190.

174 Quoted in *ibid.*, 193.

175 Quoted in Coleman, *Bigfoot!*, 236.

176 Krantz, *Bigfoot Sasquatch Evidence*, 10.

177 The James Randi Educational Foundation tested just such a claim in 2007. Rosemary Hunter “applied for the JREF’s Million Dollar Challenge with the extraordinary claim that she can make people urinate with the power of her mind,” but failed the preliminary test (Alison Smith, “Rosemary Hunter’s Challenge Test,” November 11, 2007, James Randi Educational Foundation, <http://www.randi.org/site/index.php/jref-news/108-rosemary-hunters-challenge-test.html> [accessed March 18, 2010]).

178 John Bindernagel to Daniel Loxton, November 29, 2004.

179 Daegling, *Bigfoot Exposed*, 194.

180 Jason Loxton to Daniel Loxton, March 19, 2010.

181 Quoted in Coleman, *Bigfoot!*, 236.

182 Bindernagel to Loxton, November 29, 2004.

183 Green, *Sasquatch*, 409–410.

184 Several such cases are described by Janet Bord and Colin Bord, including that of Richard Davis, alleged to have shot a Bigfoot in the chest with a revolver in 1975—at close range. According to the tale, Davis saw the bullet hit the creature, which then ran off. (This case also has a paranormal aspect, with Davis psychically prevented from emptying the remainder of the cylinder into the creature’s chest.) See Bord and Bord, *Bigfoot Casebook Updated*, 140–141.

185 Daegling, *Bigfoot Exposed*, 194.

186 I have argued that all parties should be able to agree that it is possible for entire categories of paranormal claims to be completely bogus, with hundreds or thousands of supporting testimonials comprising nothing but mistakes and hoaxes. All that’s needed to demonstrate this to the satisfaction of almost everybody is to go through a list of similar claims: Bigfoot, fairies, ghosts, alien abduction, mermaids, and so on. See Daniel Loxton, “An Argument That Should Never Be Made Again,” February 1, 2010, Skepticblog, <http://skepticblog.org/2010/02/02/an-argument-that-should-never-be-made-again/> (accessed February 28, 2010).

- 187 “Bizarre Encounters in Wahiawa, Hawaii,” and “State by State Sightings List,” Bigfoot Encounters, <http://www.bigfootencounters.com/sbs/aikanaka.htm> (accessed March 8, 2012).
- 188 Green, *Sasquatch*, 233.
- 189 Krantz, *Bigfoot Sasquatch Evidence*, 236.